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African Union Celebrates the Africa Environment Day and Wangari Maathai Day

Tunis, Tunisia 04 March 2013- the Africa Environment Day and Wangari Maathai Day has been marked in Tunis, Tunisia today 04 March 2013. It was celebrated for the 11th year since 2002 when it was adopted by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Durban, South Africa.

The Theme of the 2013 Africa Environment Day is “*Partnership for Africa’s Transition to Green Economy in support of African Renaissance*”, which aims to recognize the strides made by AU Member States towards the path of sustainable development and encourages them to embrace the Green Economy to accelerated sustainable development and poverty eradication efforts on the continent.

The commemoration ceremony was officially inaugurated by H.E Mamia El Benna Zayani, Minister of Environment, Government of Tunisia in the presence of Mrs. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, AUC; Mr. Mebrhatu Desta Deputy Director for Africa Region, UNEP; representatives of other partners institutions and officials from various Ministries of the Government of Tunisia as well as members of academia and media.

In her message, H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), read for her by Mrs. Tumusiime, recognized the responsibility incumbent on the Commission to preserve and promote the environment in a way to ensure sustainable development as the endeavor of Africa’s present generation to balance economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.

“...we encourage more and more countries to take the route of sustainable production and consumption especially as we mark this year, the Golden Jubilee of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) under the theme: Pan Africanism and African Renaissance....”, the Chairperson said. (*the complete speech of the Chairperson is available on www.au.int*).

During the official opening ceremony, Mrs. Tumusiime extended her appreciation to all partners who worked closely to support and make this special day memorable. She emphasized the continued collaboration in the areas of sustainable development, combating desertification, forest management or disaster risk reduction, and meteorology services.

Ms. Benna, underscored strategic partnership as a key for the future of Africa. She also underlined that the development of green economy is based on water, energy and food. “We cannot think of the future of Africa without these elements”, she said.

Representing UNEP, Ms. Angele Luh, UNEP Liaison Office to AU, UN Economic Commission for Africa and Ethiopia, said that Tunisia has registered tremendous progress in accelerating transition to a green economy that would contribute to a competitive, innovative and sustainable economic growth with significant social and environmental benefits.

In 2011, Tunisia recorded the second largest production of organic farming in Africa with over 285,000 ha of organic farms and organic agriculture product exports reached 89 million Tunisian dinars, which increased 20% from 2010, according to UNEP statement.

The commemoration of the African Environment Day and Wangari Maathai Day in Tunis was marked by a visit to Zaghouan, where Tunisia is taking laudable steps in preserving and conserving the environment and biodiversity through Jabel Zaghouan national park, the Water Temple and the Eco Lounge at Dar Zaghouan. The visit to school children s environment clubs was among the different field events. There was also a visit to the Tunisian International Center for Environment Technology in Tunis, (CITET).

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