

AFRICAN UNION

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**Statement by Her Excellency Ms. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime
Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture**

**African Union Commission
on the occasion of the**

**Side event on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative
(GGWSSI)**

Doha, Qatar, 5th December 2012

at the EU Pavilion

- **Your Excellences Honourable Ministers of Mali, Chad and Gambia,**
- **Unccd Executive Secretary, H.E Luc Gnacadja,**
- **Global Environment Facility (GEF) Representative Roland Sundstrom**
- **World Bank Representative, Peter A. Dewees**
- **Honourable**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is a great honour and privilege for me to take part in this side event that seeks to build a wider collaborative partnership/or alliance with the key stakeholders with a view to accelerating the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative of the African Union.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Through various decisions of the AU Assembly since 2007, the African Union Commission was called upon to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the GGWSSI, as well as to mobilize financial resources to realize that objective. Responding to these decisions, AUC, in collaboration with the European Union, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Institutions of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD), namely, the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat, has gone a long way to put in place an enabling environment for the implementation of the GGWSSI. Two projects, covering 13 countries are ongoing, through this support, elaborating national action plans, a regional harmonized strategy, as well as a knowledge management and best practices sharing platform. The thrust to mobilize resources has been hinged on these milestones.

The work done by the African Union Commission and its partners have paved the way for field investments by the World Bank through its Sahel and West

Africa Programme. We must recognize that, to date, only this initiative of the World Bank supports field interventions.

This side event organized by the African Union Commission and the partners aims at presenting what we have achieved so far, and to identify ways and means to attract more donors and boost the implementation of the Initiative.

Recently in Arusha, Tanzania, the 14th session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment decided to consider the Great Green Wall as a flagship programme representing Africa's contribution to the achievement of neutral land degradation. At the same time, there was recognition that this endeavour would bolster Africa's commitments towards climate change mitigation and adaptation. The same AMCEN's session paved the way for Africa to speak with one voice regarding the implementation of the Initiative. I wish, at this juncture, to assure you that the African Union Commission will continue to do its utmost in supporting and coordinating the implementation of this African ministerial decision which aims at extricating more than 200 million Africans from food insecurity and poverty.

I take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to all of our partners that are working diligently with the African Union Commission to support AU Member States in implementing the flagship programme. The aim of the programme is to halt the advancement of Sahara desert and improving the livelihoods of people living in the Sahara desert and the Sahel. The programme will also enhance the capacity of communities to improve their resilience to climate change and climate variability. Allow me to expressly mention the European Union, which, under the theme 6 of the AU-EU strategic partnership,

climate change and environment, has provided the Commission with a grant of 1.4 million Euros to foster a conducive environment for the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative in eight (8) African countries. Further assistance has also been extended through the Food and Agricultural Organization currently supporting the Commission in five (5) other countries. My sincere gratitude goes also to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank that are jointly supporting 12 African countries to implement the Great Green Wall through the Sahel and West Africa Programme. These are, indeed, productive partnerships.

On this note, I wish to reassure Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the African Union Commission, together with its partners and in particular the EU, FAO, the UNCCD bodies, the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall, the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency, among others, will continue to support the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative to promote the implementation of long term solutions that would mitigate the effects of the recurrent drought which undermine the development efforts in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa.

I thank you for your kind attention.