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Press Release N°367/2016

Senior officials meeting of the 3rd Africa-Arab Ministerial Conference on Agricultural Development and Food Security Kicks off

Khartoum, Sudan: October 31, 2016-The 3rd Africa-Arab Ministerial Conference on Agricultural Development and Food Security kicked off under the theme, “Promotion of Africa-Arab Trade and Investments for Accelerated Agricultural Development and Enhancing Food Security.” The Under Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Sudan, Engineer Ali Gadoom Elghali Osman, the African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, H.E Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, the Director-General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, His Excellency Dr. Tariq Bin Musa El-Zadjali, graced the opening ceremony of the meeting..

Commissioner Tumusiime informed the meeting of the establishment and operationalization of the Facilitation Unit comprising coordinators from the African Union and League of Arab States who are presently working on implementation of the Sharm El-Sheikh Joint Action Plan (JAP). She, however, revealed that the implementation of the JAP is riddled with financial and administrative difficulties, which necessitates new mechanism for mobilizing resources and implementing activities for achieving the defined programme goals.

Commissioner Tumusiime further pointed out that the Africa and Arab countries have low agricultural investment rates relative to the average for developing countries.

“The solution to this impasse rests in catalyzing the private sector, which has abundant resources for boosting the agricultural sector in the two regions,” she said.

Engineer Ali Gadoom Elghali Osman, pointed out that the Joint Conference could not have come at a better time as both regions are faced with food shortages and global commodity price increases.

“Therefore, this motivates Sudan to exert maximum efforts to work closely with the AU and the Arab League to dedicate and exploit its vast natural and agriculture resource base, especially in the light that Sudan has been nominated among three countries designated to be the world’s ‘food basket’,” he said.

Engineer Osman further called for concerting efforts towards joint development cooperation programmes and enhancing agricultural infrastructure that would act as an attractive factor for African Arab Investments.

And H.E. Dr. Tariq Al-Zadjali called for increased cooperation in agriculture to guarantee the food security in the African-Arab region. He further called on the private sector in both regions to support the implementation of the JAP.

H.E Al-Zadjali urged Member States of the two organizations to provide an enabling environment for the sector private to invest in the agricultural sector, including transparency in tax and excise systems, removal of administrative restrictions, land allocation and catalyzing creation of private companies.

The Senior Officials Meeting concluded by drafting the “Khartoum Declaration on Promoting African-Arab Investment for Accelerated Agricultural Development and Attainment of Food Security,” which shall be considered by the Ministers of Agriculture in their meeting on 2nd November 2016.

The Conference was attended by senior officials from Member States of the African Union and the League of Arab States. Also in attendance were representatives the African Union Commission, the League of Arab States Secretariat, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Food Programme and private sector organizations.

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