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AFRICA-EUROPE ALLIANCE: A POLITICAL DECLARATION FOR A STRONGER PARTNERSHIP IN AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FARMING

On the occasion of the third African Union – European Union agricultural ministerial conference, African Union and the European Union representatives for the first time endorsed a Political Declaration, accompanied by an action agenda, with the overall aim of further strengthening the Africa-EU partnership in food and farming at all levels.

From climate action to an African-European farmers' cooperation programme, these actions build on the recommendations put forward by the Task Force Rural Africa back in March 2019, an agri-food and rural agenda for the new 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' unveiled by Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in September 2018.

Commissioner Phil **Hogan**, European Union Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development said: *"This Political Declaration represents an historic commitment by both continents to a shared agenda for greater action; building a partnership of equals for developing policies in the areas of food security, climate action, sustainable management of resources, rural job creation, sustainable investment and fair trade. It should be viewed as a very positive step on the path towards a more sustainable and prosperous future for rural communities in Africa and Europe."*

African Union Commission (AUC) Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture Amb. Josefa **Sacko** said: *"I look forward to a stronger AU-EU partnership for revitalizing rural transformation in Africa. This third AU-EU ministers of agriculture conference gives us the impetus and opportunity to advance this agenda". She noted Africa's landmark step with the entry into force of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 30 May 2019.*

"I am confident that a re-energized AU-EU collaboration on pertinent issues including robust Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS), biotechnology development in the face of climate change will enhance Africa's trade capacity. This is the digital age and I welcome partnership in using digital solutions in agriculture including research and innovation that address vulnerability to the negative effects of climate to Africa. These ambitions require both public and private investment and I encourage that we all endeavour to work towards, and create conditions for increasing private investments in sustainable agricultural value chains that target youth and women as the future of our continent", she emphasised.

The Political Declaration is a strong signal reflecting the shift in Africa-Europe relations based on promoting policy dialogue and cooperation as a development tool, bringing the two continents closer at all levels: people to people, business to business and government to government.

These different levels are also reflected in the action agenda, endorsed by all Member States. It includes concrete actions involving cooperation between the two continents in different areas, such as:

- **Farmers' organisations:** launch of a multiannual cooperation programme with African continental, regional and national farmer organisations. The programme will focus on farmers' integration into value chains while strengthening capacities of farmer organisations to influence policies and business environments. It will also contribute to the strengthening of farmer organisations themselves through better governance, accountability and service delivery.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards and Food safety:** The aim is to strengthen SPS Compliance and food safety governance in Africa and establishing adequate governance structures. This is being implemented mainly through discussions on the support to the implementation and operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Annex on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures.
- **Research and innovation:** Three new contracts will be signed today to boost research and innovation under the Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA) Initiative:
 - i. A support programme for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) ex-pillar IV African research organisations (FARA, AFAAS, ASARECA, CCARDESA and CORAF), to be signed with IFAD, aimed at transforming agriculture and food systems and influencing policy-making (€30 million EU contribution).
 - ii. Support for the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP), to be signed with the FAO, to implement the TAP Action Plan (€5 million EU contribution).
 - iii. The One Planet Summit Fellowship Programme, to be signed with Agropolis Foundation (other partners: the Bill and Melinda Gates and BNP Paribas foundations), for African and European scientists working on the challenges of adapting African agriculture to climate change (€3 million EU contribution).
- **Geographical Indications (GI):** The EU to provide support, through the Pan-African programme, to the implementation of the **AU Geographical Indication Strategy for Africa**. The continental strategy serves as an instrument for rural development especially for smallholder farmers. It will more specifically launch an Africa GI training programme and an Africa GI web platform, i.e. a database for all African GIs; and will provide support to concrete GI pilot projects.

Effective follow up will commence immediately to ensure long-term implementation of these areas of cooperation.

Media contacts:

Molalet Tsedeke; Directorate of Information and Communication; African Union Commission; +251-911630631; E-mail: molalett@africa-union.org

Louise Bogey; Information and Communication Officer: European Commission; Tel- 32485452992 ; E-mail- Louise.BOGHEY@ec.europa.eu

For More information:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/au-eu-conference-2019-jun-21_en

<https://au.int/en/newsevents/20190621/third-african-union-european-union-agriculture-ministerial-conference>

