

**AFRICAN UNION**  
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**KEYNOTE STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MRS. TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE, COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND  
AGRICULTURE,**

**THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION,**

**AT THE CHINA-AFRICA POVERTY REDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM**

**White Sands Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - 28 July 2012**

**Your Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania;**

**Your Excellency, Mr. FAN Xiaojian, Minister of the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development (LGOP) of the People’s Republic of China;**

**Your Excellency, Mr. LV Youqing, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Tanzania;  
Dr. Philip Isdor Mpango, Executive Secretary of the President’s Office Planning Commission (POPC) of Tanzania;**

**Dr. HUANG Chengwei, Acting Director General, International Poverty Reduction Center in China;**

**All key stakeholders**

**Representatives of Development Partners,**

**Distinguished Guests, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Union Commission and my own behalf, I am honoured that I was invited to participate and share the AUC’s experiences and insights around the fundamental issue pertaining to poverty reduction and development in Africa. Africa is entrapped in poverty when it is endowed with natural resources! I am pleased to note that this paradox is the motivation for this Forum. I commend the joint organizers of this event: the President’s Office Planning Commission of Tanzania, China-Africa Agriculture Investment Company and China Agricultural University. This is significant for South-South Cooperation.

I find timely and pertinent this Forum’s Theme: **“Agricultural Modernization for Poverty Reduction”**. This theme rhymes well with the AU-led flagship programme, namely: the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which came into being in

2003 in Maputo, Mozambique, as Africa's Heads of State and Governments made a commitment to an agriculture-led economic growth agenda, in a bid to reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Since then, the AU committed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to plan, coordinate and facilitate country processes leading to the realization of the vision of CAADP; while AUC's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, working through the Continent's Regional Economic Communities, plays leadership, oversight, support and monitoring roles in CAADP implementation.

I am pleased to report that CAADP is steadily gaining new grounds in terms of active political leadership commitments at the national level, alignment of national development plans to CAADP, resource allocations and, above all, causing growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a significant number of AU Member States. A key architecture of this African home-grown agenda is to rally, nurture and capacitate partnerships amongst the various stakeholders, bringing them to a roundtable, to strategize together and harness synergies for a comprehensive agriculture-led growth agenda. At continental level, the AUC and its partners have so far facilitated eight CAADP Partnership Platforms. Through these partnerships, the Continent has realized 50% countries with CAADP-informed, independently reviewed Agricultural and Food Security Investment Plans. Over a third (39%) of the African countries held high-level Business Meetings in which governments, bilateral and multilateral development partners committed resources to fund the Investment Plans. More countries are expected to join the CAADP process, as success stories and best practices reenergize the CAADP momentum.

This positive trend has also come with challenges, notably issues of capacity, financing and global trends. Besides this, with the target year (2015) for attainment of the Millennium Development Goals fast approaching, while poverty levels and food and nutrition insecurity remain unfettered, the situation could not be more unsettling. This ushered in a new thinking. Partners in the last two annual CAADP Partnership Platforms in Yaoundé, Cameroon and Nairobi, Kenya endorsed the principle of *"Sustaining the CAADP Momentum"*, which unpacks a

renewed approach for accelerating CAADP towards rapid results and quick impact. Key among the drivers of this new initiative are: (1) Identification of key priority areas for investment focus, financing and implementation, drawing from best practices; (2) adoption and delivery of proactive private sector-driven partnership investment mechanisms – including ‘Grow Africa’, which is co-sponsored by the African Union Commission and the World Economic Forum; (3) increasing regional coordination of the Agricultural Sector Investment Plans and; (4) capacitating countries to attain locally available knowledge, information and skills. This fourth strategic cornerstone reinforces the CAADP Pillar 4 (thematic area, which emphasizes generation, application and dissemination of science, research, innovation and adaptation of agricultural technology to promote productivity, market access and increasing the contribution of the agricultural and animal resource sector to Africa’s economic growth.

China’s engagement with Africa, with the noble aim of reducing poverty through agriculture-led economy, giving prominence to research and technology application, is most welcome. As has been expressed in the objectives of this Forum, China having disentangled itself from the bondage of poverty, to earn the status of an ‘Industrial Elephant’, is a model that inspires Africa in its pursuit of socio-economic development through agricultural transformation.

It is gratifying that China, in the spirit of the South-South Cooperation is ready to cooperate in critical areas of socio-economic development. I am satisfied that this Forum is for driving agriculture on the Framework of CAADP. Indeed, this China-Africa cooperation has heightened at the the time when reality has imposed the fact that only agriculture, not oil, not mineral resources and not labour and raw materials, can effect and sustain economic growth, food and nutrition security and stability. Agriculture remains the mainstay of most African economies and the principal source of livelihood of many households, communities and nations.

Your Excellency the President, Excellencies, our Valued Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Union Commission lauds the aims of this Forum, which gives focus to agricultural modernization as the engine for reducing poverty in Africa. While we appreciate the

competence of the experts attending this Forum, I wish to flag out three key areas of our particular expectations. First, realizing that Africa is challenged by acute shortage of market infrastructure, there is need to lay down strategies for increasing market infrastructure, especially in rural communities. This need has been expressed by many farmer organizations under the umbrella of the Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO). Our rural producers are also unable to store their agricultural produce in appropriate and secured storage facilities and as such post-harvest loss are persistently high. Appropriate technologies are therefore needed in this regard. Both components are critical to improving food access and cutting down poverty significantly.

This should come in the form of reaching bilateral agreements with China for construction of feeder roads linking rural communities to trading centres. Rural farmers in Africa also lack transport means for taking their produce to markets. We believe that railway infrastructure, while considered too costly, can by far improve exchange of commodities and bring Africa together at far cheaper cost than any other mode of transport. Much as short-term solutions are critical, long-term ones offer sustainably improved livelihoods. At Africa Union Member States' level, we acknowledge the increased effort in prioritizing agriculture, as spelled out in most of their Poverty Reduction Strategies and Agricultural and Food Security Investment Plans, we call for some policy and institutional improvement with emphasis on incentivizing farmers toward increased productivity.

Secondly, and in response to the challenge Africa faces in producing for self-sufficiency, and disturbed by the reality that average farm yields are comparatively very low due to lack of knowledge of production technologies, China could be the antidote to the dilemma. We need more farming, animal and fishery production technology and research dissemination strategies, which is in itself a form of incentives for encouraging farmers to produce more. To meet household and national needs.

Thirdly, recent agriculture development and food security strategies have placed emphasis on

comprehensive investment along the value chain. We are convinced that this will bring about the desired poverty reduction. China has no doubt done well in this respect and Africa could benefit a lot from interventions for local food processing and packaging.

In this vein, I trust that all participants will accord due attention to the deliberations during this Forum in order to produce practicable and realistic solutions and utilize the offered good will by the People's Republic of China. This can be the time to bail Africa out of the indignity of severe poverty, vulnerability and low resilience to causes of food and nutrition insecurity in order to achieve the vision of an integrated, strong and prosperous continent.

I thank you all for your attention.