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PRESENTATION ON THE AU ASSEMBLY DECISION ON AMCEN

by

**H.E Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner
for Rural Economy and Agriculture**

at the African Union Commission

on the occasion of the

**Meeting of the Bureau of the African
Ministerial Council on Environment
(AMCEN)**

Sunday 20 February 2011

Nairobi, Kenya

President of AMCEN

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me reiterate my gratitude to you for this opportunity to address this issue.

I wish to specifically introduce the AU Executive Council Decision (**Ex.CI/Dec.612 (XVIII)**) on the Report of the 13th Session of AMCEN. May also use this chance to thank you Mr. President for having hosted and facilitated the said Meeting successfully and gracefully.

By the above-mentioned Decision, the recommendations, decisions and Declaration by the 13th Session of AMCEN were endorsed by the AU Executive Council and, subsequently, by the Assembly which is the highest policy organ of the AU. This endorsement is also a vote of appreciation of the great work of you, Honourable Ministers under the umbrella of AMCEN, ranging from biodiversity, climate change, and natural resources management to sustainable development and as we move towards CoP17, Rio+20 and other relevant high-level global engagements.

As you would recall, the AU Assembly had in 2009 taken a Decision (**Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII)**) on the Specialised Technical Committees configured into 14 in number, among which is the **Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment**. The other **STCs** are:

1. Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration;
2. Committee on Trade and Industry and Minerals;

3. Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructures, Energy and Tourism;
4. Committee on Gender and Women Empowerment;
5. Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs;
6. Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment;
7. Committee on the Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralization;
8. Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control;
9. Committee on Migration, Refugees and IDPs;
10. Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports;
11. Committee on Education, Science and Technology;
12. Committee on Communication and ICT;
13. Committee on Defence, Safety and Security.

Therefore, the subsequent decision taken last month requested the Commission, in collaboration with the AMCEN Secretariat, the National Planning and Coordination Agency(NPCA) and our strategic partners, particularly AfDB, UNEP and UNECA, to formalize the role of AMCEN under the above-mentioned STC.

You may also wish to note that at the time when the Constitutive Act of the AU was put in place, AU Member States agreed on sectoral areas to start with. They put together sectors that were considered as being closely related. This cut across all the 8 Departments of the Commission, namely:

1. Economic Affairs,
2. Human Resources, Science and Technology,
3. Infrastructure and Energy,
4. Peace and Security
5. Political Affairs,
6. Rural Economy and Agriculture,
7. Social Affairs and
8. Trade and Industry.

For example, Energy and Infrastructure including ICT, were grouped together. Though they are not necessarily related, they were rightfully considered to have strong linkages. The Department of Social Affairs groups together health, nutrition, youth, sports and so on. For **Agriculture**

and Rural Economy, Member States decided to put together all the sectors that were deemed as interrelated, namely: crop agriculture, livestock, fisheries, water, land, forestry, environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction and rural development.

Owing to the exigencies of the day, this decision may not have been preceded by a thorough scientific **analysis of its implications**, but as time has gone by, it has become quite clear that some of the sectors placed together under different Departments of the Commission, require separate structures.

This process has already begun and it is expected that different sectors will fall under different configurations. It is envisaged that this will largely enhance the processing of decisions, recommendations and declarations of the various Ministerial sectors through the AU policy and decision-making procedures and structures/organs up to the highest level. In the case of Environment, it falls under the **Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment**.

It is, therefore, timely and pertinent that you, Honourable Ministers, are addressing yourselves to this key issue and we would like to count on you in taking it forward including through **lobbying the Executive Council** which, as you know, is constituted by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the AU Member States. It is important to impress upon them the need for their necessary support for the expeditious implementation of this decision in a systematic and comprehensive manner taking into account the nature and magnitude of work under each sector. On my part, I will be organizing a Retreat in April this year for my Department and the Permanent Representative Committee constituted by all the Ambassadors of AU Member States, accredited to the African Union. I will use the opportunity to of this Retreat to , among others, raise the issue of STCs and particularly the concerns and proposals of AMCEN.

As I indicated in my remarks during the Opening Session, the Commission salutes the role played by AMCEN and commends the support provided by UNEP and other partners. In the same vein, we look forward to continued

cooperation, collaboration and support from UNEP, UNECA, AfDB and others, as we endeavour to operationalise the above-mentioned Decisions pertaining to STCs, and specifically, AMCEN.

I should probably point out, at this juncture, that **the formalization of STCs does not and should not imply that relevant partners cease to play their supportive role** which, as I just stated, we value highly. We, therefore, believe that no matter the location of AMCEN Secretariat, UNEP will maintain its support to the extent possible. The Commission is committed to play its part in terms of budgetary, technical and physical support for AMCEN as will be the case for other STCs. As usual, we will continue to be guided by the AU policy organs of which AMCEN is part. We would also like to continue to benefit from the support of our partners such as UNEP.

With these few introductory remarks, I hope, Mr. President, the discussion can ensue for further clarification and guidance on the way forward.

Thank you.