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Speech for the Signing Ceremony of the MOU between the AUC and the Africa Rice Center

H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission

Dr. Papa Abdoulaye Seck,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Union, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for coming to Addis for this important event to formalize the collaboration between the African Union Commission and the Africa Rice Center.

This MOU is imperative for the Commission for several reasons. First, it offers us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the Maputo Declaration on an agricultural-led growth strategy for our continent through the CAADP process.

Second, it also offers us an opportunity to fully recognize *again* rice as a strategic commodity for food security and poverty eradication in Africa.

I say again because, as you know, our Member States endorsed at the 2006 Abuja Food Security Summit, rice as one of the strategic commodities for the AUC to promote and protect to ensure food security on the continent.

Finally, today, the AUC gets an opportunity to take one concrete step towards the achievement of a vision that both our institutions share; one of an Africa free from hunger and poverty.

By signing of this MOU, we agree to foster collaboration and strengthen working relationship between the Commission and Africa Rice in order to improve the general well-being of its people.

We shall collaborate to promote Rice production technologies and strengthen the capacities of relevant specialized African institutions in areas of:

- (a) Policy research and analysis;
- (b) Promoting production technologies and agricultural innovative systems;
- (c) Provision of policy communications and facilitating dialogue to inform and improve the design and implementation of food and agricultural policies in and among the Member States of the African Union.

We shall also work together to jointly implement programmes and projects, such as the AUC – ECA – FAO project on providing a policy and regulatory framework for AU Member States to develop and promote regional value chains for strategic commodities in Africa. For Africa Rice, this means the development of rice value chains, especially in the ECOWAS region.

I thank you truly for this opportunity, as I look forward to giving my full support, in my capacity as the AUC Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, to make our collaboration successful.

Thank you.