

AFRICAN UNION

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Opening Remarks by

H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace

Commissioner,

**Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture,
African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

AMCEN Bureau

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Nairobi, Kenya

**Honourable Minister of State-Environment in Tanzania, and the
AMCEN President**

Honourable Ministers, Members of AMCEN Bureau

Director of the Regional Office for Africa

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by welcoming you and also conveying to you the warm greetings and best wishes from the Chairperson of the African Union, HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

I would also like to register appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to myself and members of my delegation since our arrival in Nairobi. I would, in particular, like to thank UNEP and the AMCEN Secretariat and other partners for the cooperation and collaboration with the African Union Commission and all the special efforts and hard work involved in convening this important meeting of AMCEN Bureau.

Truly, our event today is taking place after receiving with great shock and sadness the death of some 68 Mozambicans after recent heavy rains earlier this month in Northern and Central Mozambique, which have affected 350,000 people and displaced nearly 170,000. The floods, which have also hit neighboring South Africa and Zimbabwe, are the result of days of torrential rains that swelled the Limpopo River to devastating levels.

Meanwhile, our meeting today is taking place after Rio+20; the 19th and 20th Sessions of the AU Summit which called upon the AMCEN to conduct a substantive analysis of the RIO+20 outcomes; and 14th AMCEN Session in Arusha in September 2012, which decided to develop and implement regional flagship programs as a means to ensure the effective implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes. It also comes after the global

climate change negotiations, CoP18/CMP8 in Doha, Qatar. This is, indeed, a momentous occasion and a critical juncture.

**Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our meeting today, therefore, offers an opportunity to debate ways and means for implementing outcomes of the Rio+20 Summit and AMCEN decisions and Arusha Declaration adopted by AMCEN at its 14th Session.

Indeed, to maintain the momentum built by the Rio+20 process, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2012 adopted a decision, calling on the Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and other partners to intensify efforts to facilitate and coordinate effectively the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes to support Africa's sustainable development agenda. The Commission for her part remains ready to support the work of all stakeholders and partners in this direction.

The AU Executive Council, at the just concluded 20th AU Summit, endorsed the recommendations drawn by the 14th Session of AMCEN for development and implementation of the regional flagship programs and the establishment of the African group of negotiators on biodiversity and its coordination mechanism at Expert, Ministerial and Heads of State and Government levels, taking into account the relevant decisions of the AU Assembly and the Executive Council on the establishment of specialized technical committees and their operationalization in 2014. Report on practical modalities for STCs operationalization was submitted to the January 2013 AU Summit.

I am pleased to report that the AU Commission in collaboration with AMCEN Secretariat, UNECA, AfDB and the NEPAD Agency organized an expert joint working session in Addis Ababa to discuss and agree on the key principles and approaches that are to be followed in the development and implementation of the Flagship programs.

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Regarding preparations for the UNFCCC COP 19, the AU Executive Council also endorsed the coordination function of Conference of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) to ensure that Africa, as usual speaks with one voice, advancing one common position in the global climate change negotiations. The coordination of CAHOSCC will rotate for a period of two years for two Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the UNFCCC. The President of AMCEN will serve as Coordinator at the Heads of State and Ministerial levels to enhance linkage between the AMCEN processes to CAHOSCC in addition to providing the necessary support given the nature of expectations at this level. Furthermore, the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) experts elected at the UNFCCC forum will serve as CAHOSCC Coordinator at the Experts' level. This arrangement further enhances the cohesion and effectiveness of Africa's unified negotiating mechanism.

To face the challenge posed by climate change impacts on Africa's development prospects in particular its ability to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the AUC, as requested by AU Assembly decision (EX.CL/Dec.500 (XV) Rev. 1) has prepared in collaboration with its partners a comprehensive climate change strategy that was reviewed by

AMCEN at its 13th Extraordinary session in Bamako, Mali. This draft strategy is being finalized. In addition, as requested by AMCEN, the Commission is working towards integrating a disaster risk reduction and meteorological components into the climate change strategy.

The AU Commission in collaboration with Member States and partners celebrate annually the Africa Environment Day with the aim of raising awareness on the environmental challenges facing the continent. Since last year the Wangari Mathaai Day has been combined with the Africa Environmental Day celebration. Early next month, the celebration of this year will be hosted by Tunisia. We encourage all AU Member States to use this day and other avenues to promote awareness of sound environment management and commitment to principles of sustainable development.

**Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my conviction that the AMCEN Bureau has a critical role to play in ensuring the effective implementation of AMCEN decisions. I am also sure that strengthening partnerships and working more closely will move the African Environment Agenda forward faster.

In this regard, I wish to reassure you that the African Union Commission will continue to support AMCEN activities towards promoting environmental sustainability on the continent especially as we mark, this year, 50 years of the existence of the Organisation of the African Unity

(OAU), predecessor to the African Union and under the Theme: Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. We will be strategizing on Africa's vision for the next 50 years and as such the efforts of AMCEN on sustainable development are pertinent.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for your kind attention.