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Symposium
on
Climate Change, Pan Africanism and African Renaissance

**Statement by H.E. Mrs. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace
Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture**

16 August 2013, AUC Headquarters, Addis Ababa

Your Excellency, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

Your Excellences, my fellow Commissioners

Your Excellences, the Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps

Distinguished key-note speaker, Dr. Tewolde-Berhan Gebre-Egziabher, Advisor to the Minister of Environmental Protection and Forests, of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Distinguished experts and panelists

Representatives of development partners

Directors of the various departments of the AU Commission

Ladies and Gentlemen

The staging of this symposium on Climate Change, Pan Africanism and African Renaissance in celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of our continental institution is part of the continuous efforts of the AU Commission

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to provide fora for discussions on issues that are pertinent for Africa's development; issues that need to be addressed comprehensively in order for the continent to achieve its vision 2063.

Your Excellences, the choice of the theme for the symposium reflects the seriousness we attach to our collective efforts towards addressing the challenges posed by climate change, and seizing the opportunities offered by the renewed sense of optimism generated by Pan Africanism and African Renaissance on the other.

It has been said many times, and there are a lot of convincing reasons, that climate change and climate variability remain the biggest obstacles to Africa's development. African economies are predominantly dependent on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture, exposing the continent to food insecurity, poverty and under development.

The impact of climate change presents a serious hurdle to the fight against extreme poverty and disease. In many African countries, climate change could mean more frequent droughts and floods, water scarcity and increased health challenges. These challenges not only make achieving the Millennium Development Goals more difficult, but also threaten to reverse some of the progress already made in combating poverty and disease on the continent.

The symposium will also draw attention to the link between climate change and gender issues, especially its impacts on the advancement of women and youths, who continue to bear the brunt of the problems occasioned by climate change and climate variability.

Pre-existing inequalities among women and men increase the former's vulnerability to climate change risks and lead to lower levels of adaptive capacity among women. It also compounds gender inequity regarding access to resources and development opportunities. As a result, climate change exacerbates gender inequalities. Gender inequalities also contribute to climate change as more fragile and sensitive ecosystems are exploited to make up for the lack of environment friendly options.

In facing the daunting challenges of addressing climate change and mainstreaming gender dimensions in development efforts, Pan-Africanism provides a ray of hope as it underlines the need for the solidarity of Africans, based on the belief that in this globalized world, unity is vital to attain mutual economic, social, and political progress on the continent. Africa is not a poor continent both in terms of natural resources and human capital. The problem often has been the insufficient level of collaboration between African countries and institutions in taking advantage of their opportunities and addressing their common obstacles.

The current status of knowledge on climate change and level of technical expertise in Africa and in the African Diaspora provides ample optimism for the continent to build, and consolidate its resilience to climate change. Building on

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the spirit of Pan Africanism would go a long way in addressing the capacity gap as it would enable Africans to share experiences and resources to effectively adapt to climate change.

The concept of African Renaissance on the other hand gives hope and conviction that Africa shall overcome the current economic, social and environmental challenges confronting the continent and achieve sustainable development. Indeed, Africa shall rise to adequately confront the mounting challenges of climate change and overall environmental degradation as witnessed by the level of political awareness and commitment shown by the leadership of the continent, the dynamism of all our stakeholders and the steadfast commitment of our development partners.

This symposium is being organized with the objective of generating continental debate on the implications of climate change for Africa's sustainable development and the prospects for African Renaissance. As Africans we must build the necessary adaptive capacities not only to safeguard our hard-earned development gains but to continue to build wealth and opportunities for all African citizens' way into the 21st Century.

I have no doubt that with the caliber of experts and panelists we have this morning; we are assured of an interesting debate.

I would like to thank our distinguished speaker, experts and panelists for agreeing to join us this morning and help us enhance our understanding of the link between climate change, gender, Pan Africanism and African Renaissance.

I would like express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, formerly the Director General of the Ethiopian Environment Protection Authority, and currently Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Forests for accepting to be the Key Note Speaker for this rather challenging topic. I am equally indebted to our experts from the Addis Ababa University, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UN Women for accepting our request to serve as experts and panelists for this discussion. We are, indeed, grateful for your presence here.

I look forward to an enlightening lively debate.

I thank you all.

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