



Statement

Delivered by

**H.E. Mrs. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace
Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture
African Union Commission**

on the occasion of

**The Second Joint Conference of Africa-Arab Ministers of
Agriculture**

October 2, 2013

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



**Our Host, Honourable Dr. Fahad Bin Abdul Rahman
Balghunaim, Minister of Agriculture, The Kingdom of Saudi
Arabia**

**Outgoing Chair, Honourable Ayman Abou Hadid, Minister
of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, The Arab Republic of
Egypt**

**YE. Ambassador Dr. Mohammed bin Abraham Al Twaijri,
Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs of the
League of Arab States**

Honourable Ministers from African and Arab States

Distinguished Heads of Delegations

Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

All protocol observed.

It is an honour for me to address you on behalf of the African Union Commission during this Opening Session of the 2nd Africa Arab Ministerial Meeting on Agricultural Development and Food Security.

I wish to bring to you warm greetings and best wishes from H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Let me, from the outset, express our profound gratitude to the people and government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for graciously hosting this important Conference and for the warm welcome, generous hospitality and the excellent facilities accorded to us to make our stay and our Conference enjoyable and fruitful.

I also wish to extend our appreciation to our partners, the League of Arab States, for their good will and partnership in furtherance of our shared interests in the area of agriculture and food security.

I would like to salute Honourable Ministers present at this Conference, from both Africa and Arab regions, for remarkable commitment as demonstrated by your prioritization of this Conference out of your busy schedules.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The global challenges that we are currently facing pose serious concerns that make it absolutely imperative for us to rethink the priorities of development. The high population growth rate, the fast rate of urbanization, the changing patterns of consumption, the environmental challenges, and so on, that our two regions are currently experiencing demand that we embark on a development trajectory that accelerates transformation of strategic sectors as well as building strategic partnerships.

The African Union and its Member States have reaffirmed that sustainable agricultural growth; food and nutrition security concerns should be effectively and properly addressed to meet the challenges of transformation and development. This commitment is demonstrated by the formulation, adoption and subsequent rolling out of an overarching continental framework, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), that guides strategies, policies, programmes and collective actions to enhance agricultural development and achieve food and nutrition security objectives. CAADP has stood out as a powerful instrumental in terms of aligning and harmonizing the efforts of AU Member States as well as harnessing and mobilizing strategic partnerships around a shared vision and principles of mutual accountability for results and impacts. Key among the lessons that we have drawn from a decade of experimentation with CAADP implementation is that we should sustain the momentum in making use of CAADP to deepen partnerships to unleash our potential to meet the aspirations of our people for prosperity.

Partly because of the emphasis that our Member States have placed on agriculture, the growth performance of African countries whose economies are predominantly agricultural has been impressive over the last decade. Today, some of the fastest growing economies in the world are on the African continent, some of them not even producing oil. This fact is generating its own dynamics in terms of jobs, incomes and

wellbeing and, indeed, in changing the patterns of trade and investment in Africa, a continent on the rise and a dynamic force on the global arena.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

African agriculture and, in particular the food sector, offers a huge potential for trade and investment. In fact, over the last few years, the flow of Foreign Direct Investment in Africa has been fast growing. At the same time, we take note of the fact that the level of Arab investment in African agriculture has been increasing but could be much higher than what it is today. And, there is ample evidence that we can make the Africa-Arab Cooperation a powerful instrument to enhance trade and investment to the desired levels that match the strong cultural ties, the geographic proximity and the tremendous potential that exist within our regions.

It is in this context that the theme of this Conference, **“Strengthening Africa-Arab Cooperation through Promoting Sustainable Investment in Agriculture and Food Security in the Context of Joint Action Plan”** is both timely and relevant. It is also taking place within the Year of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, the Theme of OAU/AU 50th Anniversary and is also part of the prelude to 2014 The AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security.

In this respect, the situation calls for us to seize all available opportunities to ensure that the mutually agreed-upon plans are implemented, despite some difficulties being faced. It is critical that we strengthen the mechanisms that facilitate effective implementation and monitoring of progress in a more vigorous and coordinated fashion. The speedy operationalization of the Facilitation Unit that we jointly established is of paramount importance, and I would like to reiterate the commitment of the African Union Commission to take concrete steps in this direction. We look to you, Honourable Ministers, for leadership in ensuring implementation in your respective countries.

I am sure that our senior officials have done a wonderful job of reviewing the progress made thus far within our partnership, as well as formulating proposals for Honourable Ministers’ consideration and further guidance in expediting the implementation of the Joint Action Plan that the First Joint Ministerial Conference

adopted in Sharm El Sheikh in 2010 and was subsequently endorsed by the Africa-Arab Summit.

I wish you productive deliberations and thank you for your attention.

