



**THE ROUNDTABLE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF FISHERIES AND  
AQUACULTURE**

**30 APRIL 2014**

**ADDIS ABABA**

**ETHIOPIA**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY H.E TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE,  
COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE**

**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**Honourable Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania**

**The Hon. Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

**Representatives of Hon. Ministers**

**Representatives of the Regional Economic communities**

**The Delegation of the European Union**

**The Delegation of the FAO**

**The Delegation of the World Bank**

**The Delegation of the African Development Bank**

**We have many development partners here and I recognise you all**

**Representatives of Embassies**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

**I bring you greetings from the African Union Commission and from Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the Commission. I am honoured to welcome you to this High-level Roundtable of African Ministers of fisheries and aquaculture and to express my gratitude, on behalf of African Union, for your acceptance to participate in this very important African Union event which is happening in the 2014 AU year of Agriculture and Food Security. This underscores your continued interest in the affairs of our continent in the context of African Renaissance.**

**My apologies for the inconvenience caused to you by the postponement of this meeting from last month. We could not avoid it.**

**Today's roundtable is without doubt a significant milestone in African Union unrelenting effort to secure lasting and sustainable livelihoods for millions of our Citizens by unleashing and harnessing the potential benefits from our natural resources base, in this case, the blue economy and particularly, fisheries and aquaculture. Today's roundtable is a culmination of years of dedicated effort by the AUC-DREA, AU-IBAR and the NEPAD Agency and in collaboration with development partners. This was in response to the recommendations of the first AU Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture held in 2010, Banjul, The Gambia.**

**Honourable Ministers would agree with me that the fisheries sector currently provides a source of income and livelihoods to millions of people on the African continent, providing employment to about 12 million Africans, with women playing a preponderant role in the sector particularly in post-harvest activities, in processing and marketing.**

**I need not remind you that fish and fishery products represent a valuable source of nutrients of fundamental importance for diversified and healthy diets. Many populations in Africa depend on fish as part of their daily diet. This is evident by the fact that in some coastal countries fish can contribute to over 25 % of their animal protein intake. For most of these countries, fish and fishery products often represent an affordable source of animal protein as compared to other animal protein sources. The sector is, therefore, of utmost importance to food and nutritional security. However, in comparison to the other continents such as Asia and Europe, the per capital fish consumption has declined on the African continent as a whole to less than half of the global average of about 19 kg per person per year. The worrisome state of exploitation of these resources is a contributor to the observed decline combined with population growth. This raises serious concern for our continent since fish in most of our countries is relatively the most affordable animal protein source.**

**Honourable Ministers, we count on your leadership to sustain or sustainably increase the current benefits from the exploitation of our fisheries and aquaculture resources and as well as put measures in place for recovery of depleted resources. Honourable Ministers, your Conference in 2010 did recognize the potential of the sector, the benefits and also the challenges and therefore made far-reaching recommendations towards increasing the contribution of the sector to the socio-economic development of our continent and the wellbeing of its citizens. Key to the challenges is the less-than-desired policy coherence and coordination in the management of the fisheries and aquaculture resources across the countries. Thus surmounting these challenges and unlocking the potential of the sector would require major reforms in the governance of the sector. Hence, Honourable Ministers recommended in 2010 that the African Union formulates necessary governance instruments that would promote coherence and strengthen capacity in the AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities for realistic policy formulation.**

**In consequence of the above recommendation, I have the pleasure to inform you Honourable Ministers that the above tasks have been accomplished successfully by the Commission's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture working together with the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and is therefore the subject of this second conference. The policy framework and reform strategy for African fisheries and aquaculture has been formulated with the main purpose of facilitating coherent policy development for the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture resources in the member states of the African union. In this respect, it is worth noting that, amongst the key strategic pillars identified for policy reform, capacity development stands out as a strategic area to enhance the capacity of people and institutions in the African fisheries sector to ensure the sustainable development of capture fisheries and aquaculture, based on current and emerging trends, challenges and needs.**

**As you are aware, limited human and institutional capacity continues to be a key constraint for positive reform of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This is evident, for example, in the relatively slow pace of aquaculture development on the continent as an alternative fish production technology since about 40 years ago. Indeed, we are lagging behind.**

**Whilst impressive progress has been achieved in other continents, African aquaculture is still far from achieving its potential of contributing to food security and income despite immense ecological advantage. On the continent itself, recent estimates of total fishery production is 9.4 million tonnes with aquaculture contributing about 1.4 million tonnes. At the global level, Africa marginally increased its contribution to global aquaculture from 1.2 percent to 2.2 percent in the past 10 years. Hon. Ministers the above statistics clearly call for increased focus on appropriate capacity development for the sustainable management of our natural resources.**

**The policy framework and reform strategy provides opportunities for our member states to optimize benefits from their natural resources**

by implementing the strategic reforms enunciated in the document. This requires commitment to undertake reforms by appropriate institutions of our member states. The document provides guidance on good governance principles considered as best practices in fisheries management and outlines strategic actions for key pillars for reform of African fisheries. These include:

- sustainable uses and conservation of fisheries resources;
- promoting sustainable development ;
- promoting small-scale fisheries development;
- Enhancing capacity for responsible and equitable Fish Trade and Marketing;
- Strengthened Regional and Sub-regional Cooperation for regional fisheries management, especially for shared fish resources;
- Enhancing Awareness and Human-capacity Development in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- Increase and consolidate the African Voice in the governance and management of high seas fisheries.

My duty would not be complete without recognizing the roles of some of our member states who facilitated the development of the policy framework and reform strategy. In this regard, on behalf of AUC, my special gratitude goes to the republics of Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon and Kenya which hosted the major continental Think Tank consultative events that resulted in the production of this document. The participation of other member states in the consultative processes and including the much needed contribution by our development partners, the EU, WB, WWF, FAO, DFID, PRCM, FAO, is also gratifying. Recognition is also given to the Kingdom of Spain for the support in the development stage of the formulation process.

Lastly, I wish to extend appreciation for all stakeholders that have collaborated with the African Union towards this magnificent achievement.

**Finally I thank you all for your attention**