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OPENING STATEMENT

by

**H.E. TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE
COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND
AGRICULTURE**

on the occasion of

**The Fifth Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Transcop Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria, 13-16 May 2013**

- **Your Excellency Senator Anyim Pius Anyim (GCON), Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Federal Republic of Nigeria;**
- **Your Excellency Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction (SRSG);**
- **Your Excellency Saviour Kasukuwere, Minister of Environment, Water and Climate, Zimbabwe and Bureau Chair of African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology;**
- **Your Excellency Amb. Kadre Desire Ouedraogo, President, Economic Community for West African States Commission;**
- **Your Excellency Mr. Ryuichi Shoji, Ambassador of Japan to the Federal Republic of Nigeria**
- **Your Excellencies members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Distinguished Delegates of AU Member States;**
- **Representatives of Regional and International Organizations and Partners;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**
- **All protocols duly observed;**

Allow me to add my voice in welcoming you all and convey the warm greetings and best wishes from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Her Excellency is aware of and appreciates the important role that this Conference will play in concretizing Africa's Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which will not only facilitate the integration of Africa's priorities into the global Post-2015 Framework for DRR, but also provides a solid foundation for the formulation of the next generation of the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional

Strategy for DRR in line with the Post-2015 Framework for DRR. The Chairperson also acknowledges and appreciates the role you all have been playing in advancing DRR on the continent guided by the Africa Regional Strategy and its Programme of Action, which is in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). As you may know, part of the vision of the AU is for Africa to become a dynamic force in the global arena and I am glad that through our efforts in DRR we are contributing to that.

This Fifth Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is taking place in this beautiful city of Abuja under the theme: “Prevent Risk-Build Resilience” and I would like, in this context, to thank the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria not only for hosting it, but also for the warm welcome and the legendary hospitality accorded to all of us here since our arrival.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

This Regional Platform was preceded by pre-conference events that took place yesterday and I am informed were productive and will be concluded with a Ministerial Segment on 16th May 2014 with the adoption of the final outcome of the Platform.

I, therefore, look forward to these engagements culminating in the elaboration of the Africa’s Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and, based on that, preparation of the draft Summary Statement and Declaration, which together with Voluntary stakeholder commitment generated from the Preparatory stakeholder

consultations held today will be submitted to a Ministerial Segment for consideration and adoption.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

What makes holding this Conference unique is, among others is that:

Firstly, it is happening in the year that the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union declared as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security; and we know how relevant issues of vulnerability and building resilience are for this sector and I need not mention the impact that DRR has on Africa's predominantly rain-fed agriculture and how our work on DRR will contribute to the AU vision of a food and nutrition secure citizenry. It is also the International Year of Family Farming and the work we are doing in DRR is for households, communities and nations.

Secondly, this Conference is happening at a time when we are celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the overarching framework for African agricultural transformation that also includes strong components on resilience.

Thirdly, the Conference is happening in the year, when the African Union Commission is finalizing the development of the Africa Climate Change Strategy, which, among others, will facilitate the integration of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in our continental regional and national endeavours with a view to reducing vulnerabilities and

enhancing resilience in the face of intensifying and more frequent disasters and climate change impacts;

Furthermore 2014 is the year, when the Extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR nears its conclusion and the consultation process leading to the formulation and elaboration of Africa's Contribution to the post-2015 Framework for DRR and hence the next generation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR and its Programme of Action is underway; and

Finally, it is happening in the year, when the two other critical instruments, namely the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda and Climate Change agreement are under discussion.

All these milestones are relevant to the post-2015 Framework for DRR to enable Africa to fully realize its Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want. As we are in the last month of commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU under the Theme: ***Pan Africanism and African Renaissance***, the AU and its Member States are in advanced stages of developing the Africa Agenda 2063 on the vision of “***An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena***”. Definitely, issues of disasters shall be taken into account given their frequency and intensity as well as their adverse impacts on the livelihoods of our citizens.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is pleasing to note that the Draft Africa's Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which this Platform will further elaborate and adopt, is the product of a series of consultations and consultative meetings that took place at continental, regional and national levels over that last few years and refined at the last meeting of the Africa Working Group on DRR held on 12 and 13 March 2014 here in Abuja. The outcome of periodic assessments of the progress on the implementation of the Extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR and the Hyogo Framework for Action, and the third Global Platform for DRR has also provided invaluable inputs into the formulation process.

In light of its mandate, the African Union Commission, with support from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, has been providing leadership, coordination, and support to the process leading up to the formulation of the draft Africa's Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for DRR. The African Union Commission will continue exerting its utmost efforts in support of AU Member States to ensure the incorporation of the Africa's contribution as adopted by the Ministerial Segment of this Regional Platform into the upcoming new global instrument, post-2015 Framework for DRR or HFA2, and its implementation. Ensuring the incorporation of the Africa's Contribution into the post-2015 global Framework for DRR will mean providing an essential instrument that will allow us to transform

development to manage risk, seize opportunities and strengthen resilience, thereby ensuring sustainable development.

The African Union Commission acknowledges and appreciates the critical role that UNISDR, under the able leadership of Her Excellency **Margareta Wahlström**, has been playing in the process leading to the formulation of the Africa's Contribution to the post-2015 Framework for DRR. We also highly value the contributions from the Regional Economic Communities, our development partners and all other stakeholders in this regard.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

We are encouraged by of the key milestone achievements that we have, through working closely and vigorously, been able to register to date as the result of the implementation of the Extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy in line with HFA.

At this juncture, I would like to salute the Member States and the Regional Economic Communities that have put in place policies, strategies, plans, and programs for DRR and established institutional and legal frameworks, capacities and mechanisms to support implementation. We are happy that the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR and its Programme of Action has also enabled most Member States and Regional Economic Communities to make a paradigm shift from a reactive crisis management to a more proactive risk management. Moreover, the Strategy has been instrumental in increasing political commitment and awareness for advancing DRR in Africa in the context of sustainable development, including its integration into national and sectoral development processes and education system. It

has also played an important role in enhancing availability and access to information and knowledge around disaster risk to help promote risk informed development process and resilience building; setting and operationalizing early warning systems and strengthening preparedness mechanisms for disaster response and recovery; and establishing and operationalizing coordination mechanisms for DRR.

Despite all these appreciable achievements with far reaching impacts and opportunities, I am sure you will agree with me that there still exist some challenges that need to be addressed if we want to keep the momentum and accelerate the implementation of the Extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and be able to lay a solid foundation for the implementation of the next generation of the Extended Programme in line with the post-2015 Framework for DRR and contribute to the realization of the Africa Agenda 2063 which will place disaster risk reduction among its priorities.

Let me mention some of those challenges that most of you are familiar with ,and they include: the varying level of advancement among AU Member States in implementing the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR and its Programme of Action in line with the HFA; the limited availability and access to information and knowledge on disaster risks and losses and damages associated with them; the low capacity for translating existing policies, strategies, plans, and programmes into actions, especially at the community level where our focus should be; slow progress in harmonizing policies, strategies, plans and programmes and create synergies; and the weak accountability and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These are, indeed, areas of concern but also a reason for our doubling of our

collective efforts and, fortunately, these are surmountable if we sustain the momentum.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is worth noting that the draft Africa's Contribution to the post-2015 Framework for DRR is built on achievements to date and aimed at seizing potential opportunities and addressing challenges to advance DRR in Africa as an integral part of sustainable development.

We are further encouraged that the prioritized major focus areas identified in the Summary Statement on Africa's Contribution to the post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction include:

- Enhancing risk assessment and Institutional Frameworks;
- Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation;
- Investments in Disaster Risk Reduction; and
- Enhancing Commitments.

All these are fundamental for transforming development to manage risk, seize opportunities, and strengthen resilience, thereby ensuring sustainable development as part of the spirit and drive rekindled by the Theme of ***Pan Africanism and African Renaissance*** during the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU, predecessor to the AU.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

As I said earlier, it is my hope and I am confident that this Platform will further elaborate and adopt the Summary Statement on Africa's Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction refined by the Africa Working Group and will form the basis of the formulation of the Declaration that will be adopted at the Ministerial Segment of this Regional Platform. The Declaration together with the Summary Statement and Voluntary stakeholder commitments generated from the Preparatory Consultations will be considered for adoption at the Ministerial Segment and submitted to the Preparatory Committee of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction scheduled to take place in Geneva, Switzerland in July 2014 for consideration and to the African Union Summit in early 2015 for endorsement.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me also talk to you about another important issue of Specialised Technical Committees. Fourteen Ministerial Specialised Technical Committees (STCs), which constitute important multispectral organs of the African Union were established within various Decisions of the AU Policy Organs.

In that context, DRR falls under the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, which also includes crop agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, food and nutrition security,

forestry, water, land, environment and climate change, meteorology and climate services.

The STCs are expected to work in close collaboration with the various departments of the AUC so as to provide well-informed inputs to the work of the Executive Council in their area of specialisation. Additionally, they should be involved in monitoring the programme development and their implementation by the AU and RECs on behalf of the Executive Council.

The STCs are scheduled to meet biennially (once every two years). The Commission is now working on modalities for operationalizing the STCs. Given the number of sectors involved in the STC and the likelihood of varying priorities with time, we have considered a number of options. One approach is to organise separate meetings of experts for each sector and bring the outcome to the STC Ministerial Session. Alternatively, we may organise sectoral sub-committees to meet separately before the full STC meeting.

We will inform you once the process is completed in the AUC and the functional modalities with particular regard to the DRR sector are in place. The inaugural meeting of the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, of which DRR is part, will be convened soon and hence-forth replacing the Conference of Ministers of the composite sectors mentioned above. At the inaugural meeting, you could provide your views and guidance on the mechanism. Our focus is to ensure that the institutional arrangements for our DRR Ministerial organ enables us to hold our decision making meetings as effectively as possible.

In conclusion, I would like, once again, to express my heartfelt gratitude and that of the Commission of the African Union, to all that have directly and indirectly contributed to the process of formulating Africa's Contribution to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In particular, I wish to extend my appreciation to the United Nations International System for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR, under the able leadership of Her Excellency Margareta Wahlström, not only for its close collaboration and support during the formulation process, but also for its tireless efforts in making this Platform possible. My special thanks also go to all other our partners including UNDP, UNECA and the European Union for their continued and valuable support.

I would like also to express my profound thanks to the Regional Economic Communities and Member States not only for their active engagement in the formulation process, but also for their demonstrated leadership and ownership of the process thereby laying guarantees for consolidation and sustainability for the benefit of the citizens of Africa.

Finally, let me once again take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, especially to its National Emergency Management Agency, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for graciously hosting and providing support to this Regional Platform. Above everything else, we appreciate the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to us since the first day of our arrival in this beautiful city, Abuja.

I wish to conclude my statement by calling on all our partners and stakeholders present here to continue extending their support to complement the efforts of the African Union Commission, the Regional

Economic Communities, and Member States, geared towards accelerating the implementation of the Extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action and its successor and within the framework of the Africa Agenda 2063 on The Africa We Want, so that our citizens' vulnerability is reduced and their resilience is enhanced.

I wish you all productive deliberations and an enjoyable stay in Nigeria.

I thank you for your kind attention!