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

Delivered at the
Second Africa Dry Land Week

25 – 29 August, 2014, N'Djamena, Chad

SEM Adoum Younousmi, Ministre des Infrastructures et Transport, Représentant de SEM, le Premier Ministre ;
SE Mme Djibergui Amane Rosine, Minister of Agriculture and Environment
Hon. Mukhtar Abdulkarim Adam, State Minister for Environment, Forestry and Physical Planning, Republic of Sudan
Hon. Kebede Yima Dawid, State Minister of Environment and Forestry, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Mr Mohamed Addallahy Salim Ahmedona, Secrétaire Générale, Ministre de l'Environnement et Développement Durable, République Islamique de Mauritanie
Dr. Djime Adoum, Secrétaire Exécutive, CILSS
Mr Marc Abdala, Représentant intérimaire de la FAO au Tchad
Excellences, Distingues invites,
Chers participants,
Mesdames et Messieurs à vos rangs et titres,

On behalf of Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosozena Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, we are pleased to extend our profound and sincere appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of Chad (Pays de Toumai: Espoir de vie) for hosting the Second Africa Dry Land Week in this magnificent edifice. To you, our dear participants; Bienvenue au Pays de Toumai.

**SEM le Représentant du Premier Ministre ;
Distingués invités ;
Mesdames, Messieurs**

Forty three percent of land area in Africa falls within the dry lands. It is estimated that 45 percent of the population (325 million people in Africa) live in these areas, which despite their high potential for agriculture with plants & animals adapted to climatic variables (heat resistance, lack of water), abundant resources (mines/oil/water), diverse ecosystems (tourism, wildlife, etc.), vast landscapes ready to be developed and many unsustainable development programmes, are prone to land degradation, desertification, frequent recurrent drought, hunger and emergency assistance as well as now insecurity.

Between 1985 and 2000, Africa lost 25 million hectares to desertification, 60 million hectares to salinization and 50 million hectares to soil erosion, which impacted the continent's ability to guarantee food security for its growing population, to consolidate its development gains and to maintain peace and security.

Land degradation is an underlying cause of acute poverty and social deprivation in many rural areas of Africa as well as a major cause of environmental deterioration, poverty and food insecurity.

Dry land zones; where 70 percent of the population derives their livelihoods from natural resources are characterized by a predominantly hostile and marginal environment due to; low farm productivity (below 2.1%), high temperatures and radiation; water scarcity, unreliable rainfall patterns; barren soils; land degradation, desertification, neglect from central governments, among others. As land forms the basis of wealth and prosperity of any given society, it should be protected and developed for the benefits of the rural communities and our continent, must continue to maintain a strong stand on land degradation and desertification.

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Distingués invites ;
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Due to misconception, Dry lands are assumed to be wastelands with little or no potential, they are neglected and considered to play marginal role of the economy of national government. Regardless of their capacity to sustain agriculture (majority of crops), agroforestry, animal production (90%), livelihoods of its inhabitants, great potential for tourism development and mining, Dry Lands remain distant geographically from administrative centers. Hence, they lack basic services (health, education, agricultural and veterinary) and infrastructures (schools, markets, rural road), among others, and attract attention only when the communities living those areas require supplies of food aid, or some mineral are found.

Dry lands are under constant threat from multiple challenges and stresses such as weather variability, recurrent and unpredictable droughts, floods caused by short and heavy intervening rains) and human-induced processes including; land degradation and desertification caused by inadequate and unsustainable land use practices, which are fuelled by demographic pressure, high dependence on subsistence rain-fed agriculture, lack of employment, terrorism and civil conflicts. These challenges and stresses are often compounded by external forces to the areas; such as inadequate governance mechanisms, ineffective land tenure systems and poorly conceived national policies.

**Distingués invites ;
Mesdames, Messieurs**

Land is under increasing demand and pressure from competing uses such as agriculture, forestry and pasture as well as energy production, urbanization and extraction of raw materials. As other regions of the world turn to Africa, looking for the energy, water and food resources needed to regenerate and power their economies, Dry land areas may be primary target of land acquisitions by powerful interest. We therefore must ensure that the continent's God given and abundant natural resources are by priority, harnessed to catalyze the continent's sustainable economic development. African countries must reverse the general perception that natural resources are a curse rather a blessing, when well managed for the benefits of our populations (some developing countries have shown the way)

Unless we undertake practical measures to ensure that our productive lands are preserved, degraded lands restored and essential services are provided to the communities, the specter of social deprivation in dry lands will continue unabated and we will continue to witness the breakdown of social fabrics of many rural communities in Africa. This phenomenon is leading to increased rural–urban migration, intensifies the immigration of the youthful African population to seek economic opportunities abroad with many serious social and economic ramifications and leaving Dry land areas to terrorism/lawlessness. This had serious implications for the future (hopelessness,

lawlessness, many young people are dying while migrating), overall stability and security (ethnic conflicts and terrorism) of the Africa continent.

**SEM le Représentant du Premier Ministre ;
Distingués invités ;
Mesdames, Messieurs**

There is a strong correlation between increased agricultural productivity, food security, general security and sustainable land management in Africa. It is an undeniable fact that agriculture cannot thrive in Africa if we don't pay due attentions to dry land issues. Sustainable land management in dry lands is fundamental to the pursuit of food security, peace, security and stability in Africa

The Africa Dry land Week provides a regional forum for stakeholders in the domain of sustainable land and natural resources management to share experiences and good practices as well as challenges and opportunities. It also provides an important space for advocacy to address the challenges of sustainable land management including biodiversity conservation and improvement of livelihoods in rural areas.

The convening of the Second Africa Dry land Week in the Year 2014 is of a particular importance as we commemorate the African Union's Year of Agriculture and Food Security, the Tenth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as well as the Year of family Agriculture of the United Nations. It is therefore a fitting occasion, where we can showcase the indispensable contribution of sustainable land management especially in the dry lands to enhanced agricultural productivity and food security in Africa.

To date, forty African countries have signed CAADP compacts, many of which have credible National Investment Plans (NAIPs) under implementation. One of the main weaknesses of these national and regional investment plans, is the low importance given to CAADP -Pillar 1, even though it is well known and recognized in most of the countries and regions that Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) are at the core of serious challenges as well as threats facing sustainable agricultural production, productivity and development.

**SEM le Représentant du Premier Ministre ;
Distingués invités**

On behalf of Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosozana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission I would like to express our sincere gratitude and thank to the Government and People of the Republic of Chad for responding to the call of the Commission to host

the Second Africa Dry Land Week. This is a clear manifestation of the country's unflinching commitment to improve livelihoods in the dry lands and rural development.

I want to extend special thanks to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization for the generous support offered to the African Union Commission to fund this Week. We are equally grateful to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Global Mechanism, SOS Sahel France, Permanent Inter-State Committee for the Control of Drought in the Sahel (CILSS), the Pan African Agency for the Great Green Wall and the African Forest Forum for their support and collaboration in organizing this event and to you participants, thank you for coming.

I wish all of us a fruitful meeting and I thank you all for your kind attention.

Je vous remercie