



**Opening Statement by  
H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural  
Economy and Agriculture  
PACA Partnership Platform Meeting  
October 07-09, 2014  
African Union Commission  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**



## **COURTESIES**

Honourable Ministers,  
Excellences,  
Heads of international Organizations,  
Development partners,  
Experts, senior officials  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to first of all convey to you a very warm welcome, greetings and best wishes from Her Excellency Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union Commission. The AUC considers the issues of food safety as being critical to public health and trade. We are, therefore, grateful that you have made time to attend this special occasion where we will be able to discuss the effect of aflatoxins on our people's health, countries' economies and food security. I would also like to register my deep appreciation to all of you for making time to attend this important workshop on the theme is: ***“Working together to accelerate actions to reduce the harmful effects of aflatoxin in Africa”***

### **Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:**

It is a known fact that aflatoxins are highly toxic and are linked to cancer, immune-system suppression, growth retardation, liver disease, and death in both humans and domestic animals. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 25% of world food crops are affected by aflatoxin, and tropical countries are most at risk. Over 5 billion people in developing countries, particularly in Africa, are at risk of chronic aflatoxin exposure. Aflatoxins thus pose a threat to international trade, health, food security and many other international development efforts.

The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), under the auspices of the AU Commission, therefore, comes in handy as we strategize to step up our collective dynamism towards transforming African agriculture, achieving food sovereignty and nutrition security as per the commitments undertaken by the AU Heads of State and Government in their June 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated African Agriculture

Growth and Transformation. Without initiatives like PACA, aflatoxins would greatly undermine the regional integration process being made through Regional Economic Communities serving multiple developmental purposes in the context of building an Africa that is integrated and prosperous as well as a dynamic force in the global arena. We value highly PACA as a mechanism for preventing aflatoxin from not only degrading human health but also hampering international trade, incomes of farmers and economies of African nations.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You would recall that ten years ago, in pursuit of the goal of a food and nutrition secure Africa, the political leadership of the continent endorsed the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Within the last decade, Africa has chosen to take its common destiny in its own hands with a reaffirmation of commitment to increase agricultural production, productivity, food and nutrition security thereby combating hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and, indeed, contributing to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). I look back with pride at the the 7th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 2011 where PACA was initiated by African Union. Its creation was the starting point for all the great collaborative work that we see today on aflatoxin management and mitigation. Our leaders are increasingly recognizing the importance of mitigating aflatoxins on the continent to increase food security, protect human health and reduce economic losses due to contamination.

As you may be aware, the selection of pilot countries was undertaken in close consultation with Regional Economic Communities selected 5 pilot countries to implement activities which will lead to the mitigation of aflatoxin in the various AU Member States. I am pleased to inform you that the following Pilot Countries were selected: the Republic of Gambia, Senegal, Malawi, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

**Distinguished Guests,**

This is an important time for PACA and the entire community where great partnership against aflatoxins will be formed and synergies created. I trust that PACA will strive hard to contribute to food security, increased health and trade in Africa through aflatoxin

mitigation. And this is only possible with the support and dynamism of our farming communities, governments, the civil society, the private sector, technical and financial partners and all stakeholders. I am pleased to note that that the PACA Steering Committee continues to provide the much needed multi-stakeholder guidance of the overall direction of this important, continent-wide initiative.

As a partnership, PACA works with various stakeholders at different levels. Our partnership with all stakeholders in the fight against aflatoxins, food insecurity and malnutrition is essential and timely. It is obvious that without the cooperation and support of all our partners, our efforts and our goals would not get this far and farther.

I am glad to note that the 2014 work plan of PACA is aligned to the strategic thrust areas of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture which in turn are tailored to the Strategic Plan of the AU Commission adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in May last year. I am also happy to learn that concrete aflatoxin country action plans will be initiated in 2014 in the 5 pilot countries. This, indeed, augurs well for the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security also marking the 10th Anniversary of CAADP.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the AU Commission's commitment to tackle the silent killer, aflatoxin, through the PACA initiative. The AU Commission looks forward to working closely with all PACA partners on implementing the PACA 10 year Strategy and meeting the tremendously important challenge of "an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxins".

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you

