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## **Statement**

**By**

**H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace  
Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture**

**On the occasion of**

**The International Conference towards Research Agenda for  
Global Food and Nutrition Security**

**8 May 2015**

**Milan, Italy**

H.E. Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, responsible for the Joint Research Centre

H.E. David J. Lane, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies in Rome

H.E. David Wilkinson, EU Commissioner General for Expo 2015

Mr. Vladimír Šucha, Director General, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

Mr. Franz Fischler, Chairman, EU Scientific Steering Committee for Expo 2015

Mairead McGuinness, Vice-President in charge of Information and Communication Policy; responsible for Science and Technology Options Assessment

Representatives of Farmers' Organizations,

Private Sector Representatives,

Civil Society Representatives,

**Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to register the appreciation of the African Union Commission to the European Commission for organizing this international conference and offering the space to debate on the theme of the 2015 Women and Expo: "*Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life*" for a better life for our people on our planet.

My gratitude also goes to the Municipality of the 2015 Milan Expo for holding this successful event.

**Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, allow me to refer to facts pointing to the importance of agriculture for African citizens' shared prosperity and improved livelihoods.

Africa's population is growing by 3 percent per year, while economic growth is strong with the income growth of about 5 percent per year on average. The African market is

close to 1 billion people including 123 million middle class consumers. In addition, the fast rate of urbanization in Africa offers tremendous opportunities for agri-business industries. However, more than USD40 billion per year is spent on food importation from the rest of the world to meet Africa's growing needs, while we could have invested the same amount in Africa's agriculture to produce food, create more jobs and business opportunities on our continent, particularly for our youth and women.

Africa is endowed with abundant land and water resources suitable for agriculture, and we boast of having 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land but again this is not yet fully and optimally utilized. Currently, only 4 percent of available water resources area is being used for agriculture and our level of irrigation remains the lowest of all regions of the world.

It is a fact that available technologies can significantly increase agricultural productivity both on farms and along agri-food value chains. Today, an increasing population of African educated youth and women are eager to be involved in innovative and gainful entrepreneurship and employment in agriculture.

Engaging and empowering them in order to bring their dreams into reality is a core objective of the African Union. We seek to achieve this through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). In so doing we will be contributing towards the realization of the commitments that AU Heads of State and Government took in June 2014 in the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Africa Agriculture Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. I must add that this is within the framework of Africa Agenda 2063.

### **Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are all aware that Science, Technology and Innovations are vital for the Transformation of Agriculture in Africa. The African Union considers as critically important the role of science, technology and innovations in enhancing agricultural productivity, competitiveness and market access in Africa, and we are convinced that we have to invest more resources into Research & Development initiatives for agriculture

There have been several achievements that have been accomplished in the adoption of science and technology applications for agriculture in Africa during the past decade such as:

- Public sector Investment in AR4D has increased by 40% over the past decade in a number of countries.
- Science and technology is already making a positive difference in Africa contributing to increases in productivity of staple foods, diversification into higher value crops as well as in the 'greening' of the arid areas. This is proof that more can be achieved with greater investment.
- There is more openness by researchers and National Agricultural Research Systems(NARS) in recognizing the role of farmers in knowledge generation and decision-making.
- The number of researchers with the requisite capacity has increased on the continent.

However, Africa's Agricultural Transformation Agenda needs more significant support from the Science, technology and innovation for agricultural productivity, Post-harvest loss reduction, value chain development, Climate Change adaptation, sustainable natural resources management, understanding and leveraging markets, and taking into account sociology in production systems, among others.

### **Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The "Malabo Declaration" that I just mentioned was the climax of the manifestation of the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security. Building on the AU 2003 Maputo Declaration that brought forth CAADP, the AU 2014 Malabo Declaration adopted the following seven key commitments for sustaining the CADP momentum):

- 1) Recommitment to the Principles and Values of the CAADP Process;
- 2) Commitment to Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture;
- 3) Commitment to Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025;

- 4) Commitment to Inclusive Agricultural Growth and Transformation to contribute to halving Poverty by the year 2025;
- 5) Commitment to Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural commodities and services;
- 6) Commitment to Enhancing Resilience of Livelihoods and Production Systems to Climate Variability and other related risks;
- 7) Commitment to Mutual Accountability to Actions and Results.

Upon the request of the African leaders, the African Union Commission and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) developed an Implementation Strategy and Roadmap (IS&R) that will guide the translation of the 2025 vision and goals of Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation into concrete results and impact.

As some of you might be aware, the June 2014 AU Summit also endorsed the Science Agenda for Agricultural Research in Africa. The Science Agenda is the specific strategy on how to manage Science technology and Innovations to achieve the Malabo Declaration Goals for agricultural transformation in Africa, increasing production and productivity while at the same time reducing the drudgery that women hitherto endure as they continue to play a predominant role in Africa's agricultural development..

The science Agenda is as well the pillar on Agriculture and Food Security of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy of Africa (STISA) which is the overall framework for Africa for effective Science technology and Innovations. The S3A further strengthens the link between CAADP and the STISA which are both committed to Agricultural Research for Development.

Therefore, the Africa's priorities for Science, Technology and Innovations to significantly contribute in Africa's Agricultural transformation are already identified in the Post Malabo, Implementation Strategy and Roadmap, the STISA and more specifically in the Science Agenda.

## **Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Union Commission, therefore, welcomes this ongoing initiative which explores ways for Europe and Africa to collaborate on further development of mechanisms for enhancing Science technology and Innovations through:

- Research prioritization to ensure that knowledge is generated across the complex global agri-food system with the highest positive impact for economic, public and environmental health.
- Developing instruments for aligning complex research challenges across multiple societal needs and across space (within and between member states and beyond).
- Promoting a sophisticated and inclusive innovation culture building on European Innovation Partnerships, particularly via facilitating a sustainable bio-economy and sharing related science and institutional knowledge internationally.
- Improvement of communication and knowledge exchange that is inclusive and respectful of cultural complexity.
- Developing models of governance for delivering sustainable agriculture and nutrition from local to supra-national scales.

This event is, therefore, timely considering that within the context of the College-to-College discussions last month between the African Union Commission and European Commission, it was agreed to mobilize resources for the implementation of the research and Innovation partnership and motivate our respective Member States to do likewise for science, technology and innovation to contribute effectively and significantly to Africa Agricultural Transformation.

We look forward to seeing the EU initiative link to CAADP through the Africa Agriculture Science Agenda that the AU Heads of State and Government adopted in June 2014 in Malabo.

The College-to-College discussions also appreciated the progress made towards the establishment of a jointly funded EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership with a focus on Food and Nutrition security. It responds adequately to the long term- AU Agenda 2063 with its instruments, namely CAADP and STISA, and the EU common Agricultural Policy.

Let us now “Walk the Talk” for the desired concrete results and impacts.

**Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Union Commission once again welcomes this initiative and stands ready to collaborate with our development partners, particularly with European Commission to strengthen and implement the ongoing initiatives for the achievement of the Malabo Goals towards building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

I thank you.