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## **REMARKS**

**BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE**

**COMMISSIONER FOR**

**RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**FAREWELL DINNER IN HONOUR OF**

**DR. ABEBE HAILE GABRIEL,**

**OUTGOING DIRECTOR**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY AND  
AGRICULTURE**

**4 August 2015, Congo Hall, AUC**

**Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel, Outgoing Director of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture and your Family**

**Prof. Vincent O. Nmehielle, Director, Office of the Legal Counsel**

**Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director, Political Affairs**

**Mrs. Azeb Gebremedihin, Vice President of the Staff Association, representing the Director Programming, Budgeting, Finance and Accounting**

**Ms Sandra Oder, Secretary General of Staff Association**

**Dr. Janet Edeme, Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture**

**Members of Staff of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture**

I commend the Social Committee of DREA for a great job! And I welcome you all. I am glad you have all been able to be here. This is a day of mixed feelings. It is like when you are going to give away your daughter into marriage; you feel happy for her but you also don't feel happy she is leaving. While we are happy to see one of our own rise and spread our wings, we also have that feeling that one of our pillars is leaving our station.

But what reassures us is that you are not going far; *geographically*, you are within our continent and *technically*, you remain within our field of agriculture. So, we believe we can continue to count on you in three ways: one being to continue to draw on your institutional memory and capacity, secondly, to know that you will be helping to champion, at country level, the causes we have been working on together and thirdly, to help to further strengthen the close working relationship between our Department and your organisation.

I, therefore, would like to congratulate you in your new position where you will be taking on higher responsibilities and I think this is testimony that the African Union Commission and indeed the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture has high calibre staff attractive to other reputable international organisations.

And more importantly, I wish to congratulate you for the work well-done while you served the African Union Commission and in particular the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture. You laid a firm foundation at the Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) and since you came here at Headquarters first as Head of Rural Economy Division and later as Director of the Department, we have worked together on many strategic and technical issues furthering support to AU Member States in the multiple sectors covered by our department; building partnerships, mobilizing resources; and working closely with Regional Economic Communities and Member States. At this juncture, I must thank your Family for releasing you all this time to be so busy at the service of our continent. With your support and advice, we have ably steered this department; we have increased the number of staff from the initial small number to the size we have now and we continue to build on that to be able to meet the tasks at hand. We used to fit around one small table. We have increased in number and build capacity. We have been able to marshal multi-dimensional partnerships through which we have secured financial and technical support to our policy development and harmonisation drive across the continent, formulation and implementation of continent-wide programmes and projects. We have been able as a department to effectively to play our role of coordinating and providing

leadership and guidance to other Pan African institutions in the areas of our mandate and to promote alignment of our partners' interventions.

In all this, your personal and professional efforts and commitment are recognised and appreciated highly. I congratulate you for this.

And as you leave to take up your new post, please know that we wish you all the success for yourself and the best for your family. S they say, the world is a global village; we meet to part and part to meet. We look forward to our continued communication and interaction at every possible opportunity.

Let me now invite you all to make a toast to Dr. Abebe's and his family's best of luck; to his contribution to our collective achievements as a department; and to our continued collaboration.

Thank you.