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**OPENING STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MRS. RHODA PEACE TUMUSIIME,  
COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND  
AGRICULTURE  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE**

**FIRST FORUM OF THE MONITORING FOR ENVIRONMENT  
AND SECURITY (MESA) PROGRAMME**

**HELD AT**

**CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL**

**IN NAIROBI,**

**KENYA**

**31 AUGUST – 04 SEPTEMBER 2015**

- **Hon. Professor Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kenya**
- **H.E. Ambassador (Eng) Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**
- **H.E. Jean Claude de l'Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission and Current Chair of the MESA Programme Steering Committee**
- **Mrs. Anna Burylo, Counsellor, Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to the African Union;**
- **Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities, MESA Programme Steering Committee, AfDB, and UN Agencies**
- **Distinguished Partners and Participants**
- **The MESA Forum Organizing Committee**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is an honour and pleasure for me to address the opening ceremony of the First Forum of the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) project. I wish to convey to you the warm greetings and best wishes of H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and to welcome you all to this historic event. I wish to thank the Government and the People of Kenya for the gracious welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and my delegation. Hon. Cabinet Secretary, we are grateful for all this and the excellent arrangements put in place for the success of this Forum. I further wish to extend our gratitude to the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for hosting the historic Forum in their region.

This Forum is a great opportunity for all of us: **African Decision-makers, Experts, Service Providers and the User Community** to exchange views on

various aspects of the project in order for the MESA project to remain relevant and useful to the community that it is intended to serve in its multiple sectoral areas of focus including **agriculture, coastal and marine resources, climate variability and Climate change including assessment, natural resources conservation, disaster risks reduction, flood and drought monitoring, fisheries, forestry monitoring, land degradation mitigation, livestock management, monitoring of wildfires, and water resources management.**

As the First forum, it will help to refine the alignment of our work with the expectations and needs of our clients including the African Policy and Decision-makers, Development Planners, as well as users of products and services, the MESA project generates. Distinguished Guests might also have noted that the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), one of the MESA service providers and the MESA Continental Implementation Centre, is also marking its official kick-off of the MESA Thematic Action on ***Climate Services for Disaster Risks Reduction*** at this forum. This is a good development as it now means that all implementation centres are in the implementation phase.

## **1. AFRICA'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND MESA**

Africa is the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent after Asia. People are the most precious resource and so our efforts must be directed to serving the interest of the people and that is why the vision of the African Union is people-centred. In serving the African citizens' interests, we are

cognizant of the fact that the African continent faces diverse socio-economic challenges which manifest through decreasing food production and food supply, increasing vulnerability to drought and famine, natural disasters, land degradation, water pollution, and reduced income especially for poor small-scale farmers, herders and fish mongers.

African leaders recognize that firm strategic direction is critical for the realization of improved socio-economic conditions of African citizens. As such, the leaders have, in recent times, adopted important Decisions and Declarations to whose implementation the MESA project is contributing. Allow me to highlight the key which are of relevance to MESA:

- I) Issues of climate change and disasters feature highly on Africa's Development Agenda. African leaders, in January 2015, adopted Decisions on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction that reaffirmed the adoption of the High Level Work Programme on Climate Change Action in Africa (WPCCAA) as a blue print for climate action on the African Continent. In an effort to align the implementation of the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the African Union Commission, in collaboration with other Pan African Institutions and Partners, has put in place plans to review the Extended Programme of Action for the Strategy. In the same vein, it is pleasing to note that MESA has a dedicated Thematic Action on Climate Services for Disaster Risks Reduction and, through its various thematic actions, the MESA project contributes to the implementation of the

Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services) as well as the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

- II) At the June 2014 AU Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African leaders adopted the ***Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods***, outlining a set of specific strategic goals which, among others, summed up in the commitment to ending hunger in Africa by 2025. The Declaration highlights such critical areas to MESA as:
- (a) efficient and effective water management systems;
  - (b) strengthened early warning systems for advanced and proactive responses to disasters and emergencies;
  - (c) enhanced resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks for the African farmer, pastoralist, and fish monger;
  - (d) mainstreaming resilience and risk management in our policies, strategies and investment plans; and many others.

I wish to urge the RECs and Member States to continue with their efforts towards the implementation of this Declaration and, our development partners, to sustain support to this cause for a food and nutrition secure and poverty free Africa, through programmes like MESA and others.

- III) At the same Summit, in Malabo, the African Union expressed concern over the **“unsustainable utilization and conservation of Africa wild flora and fauna and the dramatic escalation of illegal trade in wild flora and fauna in recent years”**. MESA is already positively contributing to a solution through the **Land Degradation Mitigation, Natural Habitat Conservation, and Forest monitoring** thematic action being implemented by the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC). The African Union Commission in collaboration with Partners have now developed the **African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa**. This is our strategy to whose implementation we should all commit.
- IV) Considering the importance of having a coordinated approach on earth observation and other space-related programmes and projects like MESA, as well as the importance of meeting the space needs of African users, the Commission is in the process of finalising the African Space Policy and Strategy. With these instruments, I believe, we will effectively and efficiently exploit benefits derived from space.

Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, guided by the MESA overall objective of **“supporting African Decision-makers and Planners in designing and implementing national, regional and continental policies and development plans towards sustainable development,...”**, we should keep the project relevant by ensuring that it addresses the needs of its intended

clients. By so doing, the project shall contribute to Africa's regional integration and development which are the key tenets of the AU's Vision of an Africa that is integrated, peaceful, prosperous, people-centred and a dynamic force in the global arena.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EU**

We remain grateful to the European Union for the European Development Fund (EDF) that has been the source of funding for MESA and its predecessor projects i.e. the Preparation for Use of MSG in Africa (PUMA) and African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD). The funding to MESA amounts to 37 Million Euros excluding 3 Million Euros of administrative arrangement from the EU Joint Research Centre.

As you may be aware, the Africa-EU Partnership is one of the most productive, and has produced concrete outcomes in various areas of socio-economic development including environment, climate change, as well as regional integration. Through this partnership, the EU has been supporting Africa in various programmes such as the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), Meteorology, the Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the Disaster Risks Reduction and many others coordinated by the African Union Commission in collaboration with other Pan African Institutions and Partners. We value this support highly.

You may also be aware that the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) has been one of Africa's trusted partners for over a decade now. Africa accesses satellite data free of charge via the EUMETSAT's EUMETCast System, receives technical support from EUMETSAT in various areas including in the implementation of the MESA project as well as other meteorological and climate related initiatives, among others. The cooperation between the African Union Commission and EUMETSAT, especially in respect of the MESA project, is supported by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Implementation Arrangement which the two institutions signed in 2013. We are grateful to EUMETSAT for this strong partnership.

### **3. THOUGHTS ON THE WAY FORWARD**

Two years have passed since the start of the MESA project implementation. I wish to highlight a few things for consideration at this Forum:

1. MESA is a project and, like any other project, it has a life span. Although the GMES and Africa programme is in the formulation phase, it is important that concrete sustainability measures are put in place at all levels in order to maintain the gains from MESA. Sustainability is one of the principles in Africa Agenda 2063.
2. Timely, sustainable and reliable access to quality data by Africa is vital if the continent is to deliver and provide reliable information to inform Decision and policy making as well as development planning. This forum should seriously consider debating improvements in data access.



3. Cooperation and forging working partnerships with other institutions, and building synergies with other programmes and projects should be promoted as this will ensure efficiency and synergy in the use of resources.
4. Defining user requirements and proper information packaging are critical in an effort to meet the needs of intended people.
5. Enhanced capacity is key to sustainability. Thus the AU's establishment and operationalization of the Pan-African University and its Regional Campuses across the continent including here in Nairobi, is testimony to the importance of capacity development in Africa.
6. The continent, RECs, and Member States have policies and strategic directions in various socio-economic development areas. It would benefit the African cause if we design and implement our programmes in line with established frameworks as we strive to roll out Africa Agenda 2063 on inclusive growth, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

To conclude, I wish to thank the Organizing Committee, under the leadership of the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) for all the efforts put in making this forum happen. The guidance of the MESA Programme Steering Committee is also highly appreciated. Once again, I thank the Government and People of the Republic of Kenya for hosting the forum and according us such a generous hospitality and excellent arrangements.

I thank you for your attention.