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Opening Statement

by

H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace

Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

African Union Commission

on the occasion of the

Meeting of Experts preparing for the Ministerial Session of

the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on

Agriculture, Rural Development, Water, and Environment

5 October 2015, Addis Ababa

**Thank you, Programme Director, Dr. Janet Edeme, Officer in Charge of the
Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture
The Representative of our Development Partners, Mrs Anna Burylo, from the
Delegation of the European Union to the African Union
Your Excellences, Ambassadors,
Other Partners present in this hall
Representatives of Regional Economic Communities
Distinguished senior officials and experts from AU Member states**

On behalf of the Chairperson of African Union Commission H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and on my own behalf, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this inaugural session of the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water, and Environment. We are most grateful for your positive response to our invitation to this crucial session of the STC which covers areas of great importance to Africa's renaissance and prosperity.

Previously, we have been hosting Conferences of Ministers responsible for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Water, Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction and others, all but held at different times and with different themes. The AU Policy Organs considered the need to streamline the operations of these conferences and (i) adopted the configuration of these STCs as Organs of the Union in January 2009 and (ii) modalities for their operationalization in July 2011. As you may have read from the various documents that we shared with you in the course of sending you invitations, one of the STCs recommended for establishment was the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment where your sectors belong and we are convening this STC for the first time since they were adopted.

You as STCs, therefore, are part and parcel of the statutory organs of the AU and are expected to meet at least every two years in order to discharge the responsibilities vested upon the STCs by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. This is the first time this particular STC is meeting and hence the inaugural conference.

As you may have been following African and global events in the recent years, we have been involved in crafting instruments and guidelines to shape sustainable development issues and solutions for the years to come. At country level, most of the governments have been reviewing and designing national development policies, strategies and plans to respond to emerging challenges and threats as well as harness opportunities. At continental level and as you may recall, in June 2014 African leaders adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Africa Agriculture Growth and Transformation (3AGT), with its clearly articulated commitments on eradicating hunger, reducing poverty by half, boosting intra-African trade and enhancing the resilience of production systems and livelihoods to climate change and other shocks, all calling for action, impact and sustaining the momentum generated under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) which is quite broad and encompasses all rural development sectors. During the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security, the African Union further developed and adopted the Agenda 2063, “*the Africa we Want*” and its corresponding 10-Year Implementation Plan. These and a few others constitute Africa’s common position on the global commitments such as the just endorsed seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated 169 indicators and targets. Further, the Twenty First Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change scheduled for

December 2015, is expected to reach a legally binding global agreement on Climate Change. All these and others demonstrate a desired commitment by leaders at all levels to change the world into a better place.

You are, therefore, here to review relevant strategic goals, facilitate mutual accountability and identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment related initiatives, and their implications on the achievement of the overarching goals set out in a number of decisions, for example: Malabo on CAADP, the 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 and in line with the Common African Position on SDGs, among others.

This being the first STC, you will, among others, review and adopt the Rules of Procedure of this STC to facilitate broad-based consultation and dialogue among all relevant stakeholders on mutual accountability, mutual learning and biennial reporting on previous commitments. You are further required to:

- (a). consider various strategic documents related to Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
- (b). identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment initiatives and agree on areas of follow up actions at various levels, as you know, implementation is at different levels and impact must be felt at country level; and
- (c). examine and internalize the strategic and operational modalities for coordination mechanisms between the relevant sector ministries at Member State level, which are also linked to those at RECs level.

This conference will, therefore, provide a peer environment for exchange and learning to support the achievement of individual and collective responsibilities for relevant sector ministries targets within the STC framework and structure.

You may wish to note that in coming up with these major Decisions and Declaration such as that of CAADP and Malabo Declaration as well as the 10-Year Plan of Agenda 2063, several continental strategies were reviewed including but not limited to:

- (a) The Livestock Development Strategy in Africa;
- (b) The Framework for Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- (c) The Africa Water Vision 2025;
- (d) The Africa Regional Program on Disaster Risk Reduction;
- (e) The Strategy and Work Program on Climate Change;
- (f) The Framework on Climate Services and Metrology and
- (g) Strategy for combating illegal exploitation and illicit trade in wild flora and fauna in Africa
- (h) Strategy for Ecological Organic Agriculture
- (i) AU major Programs and Projects which have been informing these decisions including:
 - Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
 - The Great Green Wall of the Sahara and Sahel;
 - The Climate Information for Development in Africa (ClimDev);
 - The Monitoring of Environmental for Security in Africa (MESA) ;
 - The Partnership for Afratoxin Control in Africa (PACA);
 - The Pan Africa Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign (PATTEC);

- The Grow Africa Initiative for Private Sector investment in Africa and ;
- The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition
- The Plant protection Strategy

This is to mention but a few.

For the delivery of key goals on CAADP, for example, you will be reviewing the emerging guidelines and terms of reference on how to institute and ensure a mutual accountability architecture including your respective country Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) and the continent-wide Biennial review. You will be reviewing the guidelines for establishing and instituting policy plans as was required in the Implementation Strategy and Roadmap for the Malabo Declaration, among others. As you will be told and probably are aware, the Heads of State and Government will be reporting on the agreed commitments starting with the January Summit of 2018. We already started this in the Water sector and we are implementing the Kigali Action Plan coordinated by H.E The President of the Republic of Rwanda and we are seeing concrete results emerging out of this peer review.

We are all committed to deliver for impact and move to scale to deliver these commitments and targets. As you implement at country level, I will urge you to embrace working with and harness resources from different organizations and agencies. We have several of them such as Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA), and the corresponding sub-regional organizations, the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and other technical and financial partners. We have a number of them such as FAO, IFAD, WFP, AfDB, World Bank, EU, USAID, GIZ, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and many others to achieve our goals for a shared prosperity.

Also, for other sectors, there is a need for such a robust mechanism at country level in response to the decisions of AU Policy Organs as their implementation for impact must be taken at country level.

There is no doubt that we have an agenda that is full of complex and challenging issues ahead of us for the next three days. Given the caliber and capital of expertise gathered in this Hall, I am confident that you will rise up to the challenge of preparing and submitting for consideration by Honourable Ministers, process and substance outcomes that will help effectively deliver on the functions and duties of this important STC.

I wish you productive deliberations and I formally declare open the Official /Experts Session of the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

I thank You.