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## **Speech of Her Excellency the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy**

**Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim**

**Building a Sustainable Future for Africa**

**Welcome Remarks at the**

**Africa Climate Resilient Infrastructure Summit**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**27 - 29 April, 2015**

- **Excelencies African Ministers**
- **Distinguished Representatives of African Member States**
- **Distinguished Representaiveand Delegates from the International, Public and Private Organizations;**
- **Distinguished Representatives and Delegates from Development Institutions and Development Partners;**
- **Distinguished Experts;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**All Protocols Observed:**

1. I greet you all on behalf of the African Union Commission and on my own behalf, at this very important event, the **"Africa Climate Resilient Infrastructure Summit"**.

2. First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the sponsors and organisers of this important Summit, I am also happy that the focus of this Summit brings to the fore, the need to ensure climate change resilience in developing Africa's infrastructure.

3. This is more so important as Africa is currently at the stage of building its infrastructure both at the national and regional levels, which are all geared towards achieving a Sustainable Future for Africa. Africa's vision for a sustainable future involves addressing its many developmental challengesincluding poverty reduction and jobs creation, achievements of the MDGs, expansion of modern energy and healthcare services, etc. Although some gains have been recorded in many African countries in terms of these developmental challenges in the last decade, climate change poses significant threats to the continued development efforts in African countries.

4. There is an ample amount of evidence that climate change is already impacting negatively on key areas/sectors in Africa including agriculture and food security, water supply, healthcare, energy and regional security, biodiversity, etc. For example, in terms of Agriculture and Food Security, over 90% of the population in

Sub-Saharan Africa depends on rain-fed agriculture. Extreme weather conditions such as persistent droughts and floods are projected to compromise agricultural productivity in terms of yield potential, length of growing season and arable land resources. In terms of energy security, climate change related factors such as drying of lakes and rivers and persistent droughts will decrease water flow to hydropower dams. Coupled with the increasing depletion of biomass stock due to unsustainable consumption and climate change, the region will experience reduced energy availability that will have negative implications on development.

**Distinguished Experts and Delegates:**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

5. Currently, Africa stands out as the most vulnerable region to the impacts of climate change, despite accounting for less than 4% of the global GHG emissions. One of the major reasons for the high vulnerability in Africa is the low levels of infrastructure to adequately adapt to the impacts of a changing climate. The high vulnerability of the Region to the impacts of climate change is also directly linked to the developmental challenges facing the continent including weak economies and institutions, widespread poverty, limited human, financial and technical capacities, conflicts and inadequate social infrastructure.

6. To Consider in the implementation of the PIDA projects the impact of the large infrastructure projects in the climate change especially in hydropower and irrigation

7. To address the climate change problem in Africa, there is a vital need to mainstream climate change into development policies, which will provide opportunities for designing climate-resilient and low carbon development pathways for Africa. The benefits of following a low carbon and climate-resilient development in Africa include meeting our development challenges while also adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of climate change at the same time.

**Distinguished Experts and Delegates:**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

8. There is no doubt that increasing weather events across the world – droughts, floods, cyclones, severe storms, heat waves, etc – indicate that climate-proofing of current and future infrastructure is of utmost importance and it also provides a sustainable and cost-effective option in the long-run.

9. In Africa, vital infrastructure including power systems, roads, rail and communication, buildings, etc., are clearly vulnerable to weather events. However, the currently low levels of infrastructure on the continent provide Africa with ample opportunities to integrate the climate change dimension into its infrastructure development plans. Therefore, there is a great need to take into account climate change in designing, building and managing our infrastructure. Although climate-proofing of our infrastructures will add significant economic costs to our development goals, it provides a cost-effective opportunity in the long-run while also ensuring environmental and social benefits.

10. For Africa, ensuring a climate-proof and sustainable future will entail:

- i. Integrating climate-change policies into planning and implementation processes.
- ii. Repositioning current policies to stimulate adoption of climate change strategies and opportunities in our institutional frameworks, and financial and capital markets.
- iii. Introduction and promotion of innovative and climate financing initiatives as well as mobilising private sector participation.
- iv. Enhance technical capacity building that ensures technical innovations, and technology transfer and adoption.
- v. Informed decision-making through awareness creation, and research and development.

11. This Summit provides an excellent platform for our experts, policy-makers and partners to engage in fruitful deliberations and make recommendations on the way forward in enhancing the climate resilience of Africa's infrastructure. For the African Union Commission (AUC), one of our mandates is to ensure the implementation of large regional infrastructure on the continent in several key sectors including Power, Transport and ICT sectors. We are very keen to understand and deliberate on the range of vulnerabilities we could expect on our current and future infrastructure plans, the costs implications, and also the various ways and strategies that could be deployed to address these range of vulnerabilities.

12. I also believe that this Summit is going to serve as a wake-up call for our institutions and decision-makers to consider the likely impacts of climate change on our existing and planned infrastructure in various key sectors in Africa.

13. I would like to thank everyone here for attending this important Summit, and most importantly for their continuing efforts in addressing Africa's development agenda.

**I thank you all for your kind attention.**