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**2nd MEETING OF THE SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (STC)
ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, WATER AND
ENVIRONMENT**

OPENING REMARKS AT MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE STC

BY

HER EXCELLENCY MRS. JOSEFA SACKO

COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

October 5, 2017

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Honorable Minister of the Republic of Congo, Chairperson of the Bureau for the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;

Honorable Ministers from Member States;

Experts from Member States;

Representatives for Development Partners;

The Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure today to participate in the second meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment. It is my first my first STC meeting in my new role as Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture. I take this opportunity to welcome everyone to Addis Ababa, our political capital and to your Africa Union Commission headquarters.

I would like to thank you for having made time for this important meeting. Your meeting. It offers a great opportunity to assess how we are implementing our agenda 2063 and constitutes a good platform to coordinate our efforts ambitiously towards achieving our common goals of transforming our continent through sustainable

agricultural transformation for inclusive growth and shared prosperity.

Honorable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting happens at a critical moment when on average, more than 70 percent of Africa's youth live on less than US\$2 per day; the internationally defined poverty threshold. It is also happening when our continent is facing several forms of social unrest, conflicts, migration crises and terrorist activities in several AU Member States involving our youth who are unemployed.

The recent 2017 FAO report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world shows that the global food insecurity has increased in 2016 compared to 2015. The report states that *“After a prolonged decline, world hunger appears to be on the rise again. The estimated number of undernourished people increased to 815 million in 2016, up from 777 million in 2015. Much of the recent increase in food insecurity can be traced to the greater number of conflicts, often exacerbated by climate-related shocks”*.

The last 2 years, African food security has been affected by external shocks especially climate change related ones whereby most of Africa South of the Sahara experienced unprecedented droughts, and pests and diseases including the devastating Fall Armyworm that has been reported in about 30 AU Member States. Many parts of the continent are still experiencing conflicts which are a source of food insecurity and malnutrition due to disruption of household productive systems.

Member States are making efforts to implement their Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies including the National Agricultural Investments Plans and are taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the continent. Africa is endowed with plenty of opportunities and resources for agricultural transformation. The growing urbanization in AU Member States provides opportunities for the agri-business and agro-processing industry, which in turn further catalyzes agricultural production, trade and employment. Africa's population is growing by about 3 percent per year, among the fastest in the world, and so is the demand for food; hence a market for our farmers.

Indeed, our Heads of State and Government have spoken, by committing to the Malabo Declaration that articulated the new vision for African agricultural transformation and formally launched the second phase of CAADP. In June 2014, Member State committed to achieve seven Malabo commitments by 2025 including: ending hunger, tripling intra Africa Trade, promoting climate resilient agricultural systems, and investing at least 10 percent of public expenditure in agriculture to unlock private sector investments among others. All these targets are meant to contribute to inclusive growth and shared prosperity for Africans.

As a continent, we have succeeded to have a common position in different Conferences of Parties (CoP) to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change that culminated in the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. On this note I would like to call for concerted efforts at national level to implement the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – through validation and integration into national development plans. I would also like us to establish an Africa-led monitoring and reporting mechanism on the implementation of the Paris agreement. Africa also presented a common position at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction which I presented in Cancun, Mexico in May 2017.

Honorable Ministers,

This meeting will assess among other important subjects, the progress in the implementation of the Malabo declaration. As you might be aware, our Heads of State and Government called upon AUC and NEPAD Agency to report, every two years, the progress in the implementation of the commitments of the Malabo declaration. The AUC and NEPAD Agency, working closely with the RECs and technical partners have developed the biennial review mechanism, trained country teams where 51 of 55 of our Member States participated. So far 43 countries have submitted their reports which will be discussed in this meeting. After your endorsement, the consolidated continental report and the African Agricultural Transformation Scorecard will be tabled at the AU Assembly of January 2018. This report will give us an opportunity to trigger peer review and dialogue, with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of implementation on national and regional plans towards achieving the commitments. I would personally thank you for your commitment and support you provided to your country teams.

The meeting will also take stock of the decisions of the 6th Session of AMCEN held in Egypt and those of the 16th Regular Session held in Gabon, and how they can assist our continent to build resilience to climate change and risk hazards and overall realize the aspirations of the Agenda 2063.

Honorable Ministers,

This STC meeting offers an opportunity for policy makers and technical experts to revisit our developmental commitments, learn from the past and propose sound technical options and policy actions towards transforming our continent for the benefit of our people; especially the youth.

My wish, at the start of your STC, is to have you Honorable Ministers discuss and agree on: i) how we strengthen mutual accountability and Africa Agricultural Transformation Scorecard to be able to bridge the capacity gap in data collection and evidence based planning and trigger the implementation of the Malabo Heads of State commitments; ii) propose strong policy

recommendations that would ensure sustainable utilization of the vast natural resources for transformative and inclusive growth in Africa, iii) last but not least, I would like you to re-discuss and agree on the working modalities of the STC to ensure its efficiency in supporting the continent to adopt sound and implementable policies towards achieving the transformation we want.

We, in the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture and in the NEPAD Agency, will continue to be responsive and provide the required support and technical back up in the journey of sustainable Agricultural Transformation for job creation for our youth and increased incomes. We are confident that as we continue to prioritize sustainable investments in Agriculture, green and clean policies, we will be able to reach our continental and global commitments captured in the Malabo Declaration, the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, the Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

Let me conclude by wishing you fruitful deliberations and good stay in Addis Ababa.

Thank you.