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The International Conference on

“Fall Armyworm Research-for-Development – Status and Priorities for Africa”

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MRS. AMIRA ELFADIL

THE COMMISSIONER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

African Union Commission, Addis Ababa Ethiopia

October 29-31 2018

1. H.E. Dr Eyasu Abraha, State Minister for Agriculture Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ethiopia
2. Excellences Ambassadors and members of the Permanent Representative Committee
3. H.E. Dr. Martin Kropff International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)
4. Dr. Hans Dreyer, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization
5. Representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
6. Distinguished Heads of all international organizations represented here
7. All the Distinguished delegates

I am honoured to address you on behalf of H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, at **this International Conference on “Fall Armyworm Research-for-Development that will deliberate on the Status and Priorities for Africa”** that the African Union Commission organized in partnership with the international research organizations. I acknowledge and thank the members of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) for being part of this Conference to get direct information regarding the Fall Armyworm invasion of Africa. I wish to specifically, thank the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) and Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) for making this conference a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may know, **Fall armyworm** is an insect that feeds on about 100 crop species, causing damage to economically important cultivated crops. It can cause significant crop yield losses and was first reported in Africa in 2016, but the pest has since spread rapidly to 44 countries. It poses a threat to food security. Fall armyworm further, undermines trade since it affects the capacity of many countries to comply with

international Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. In Africa, maize which is the staple crops of most countries is the worst affected cereal crop during the growing season. The short term response to Fall armyworm is that farmers have resorted to using a concoction of chemicals that are harmful to the environment.

Currently, Fall Armyworm is mainly in the Sub-Saharan region, but it will most likely invade North Africa too. Countries need therefore, to monitor and prepare prevention and management strategies to manage the effect of the pest on food security and trade. I emphasize this because as Africa, we have our aspirations to achieve and they are clearly reflected in the African Union Agenda 2063. **Agenda 2063 objectives on agriculture is well defined in the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.** It is a set of new goals with in-built accountability mechanism showing a more targeted approach to achieving the agricultural vision for Africa which is for a shared prosperity and improved livelihoods.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased that during this conference, ambitiously work to **Establish an inclusive, science-based Research for Development initiative, by which evidence-based tools that are safe, effective, accessible and sustainable are developed and deployed for Fall Armyworm management by smallholder farmers across Africa.** This initiative was needed yesterday and, we, as the African Union, are delighted to put our political weight to be at the center and make it work for the good of our African citizens. Food security promotes social protection and this is my personal mandate. It is important to note that, Africa is rich in agricultural resources, but it is also the most vulnerable continent to the negative effects of climate change. It is also clear that women bear the biggest burden emerging from various farming challenges. In Africa, women contribute to at least 50% of agricultural labour, and spend the highest time on agricultural activities. Once crops are devastated, farmers need to bounce back through instruments such as crop insurance and food reserves food reserves among others.

As you deliberate today and in the coming days, Africa is counting on you, to therefore, to have a science-based International Consortium of global scale that provides a platform

for sustained collaboration, adaptation and learning for management of Fall armyworm. This will also help inform the request by African leaders for the Commission to undertake a study to inform the establishment of the Fall armyworm Fund for emergency responses. The continent is also counting on you to identify and prioritize key **Research for Development issues covering various thematic areas of Fall Armyworm management**. Last but not least, we are looking up to you to **formulate a set of priority actions and develop an action plan** for resource mobilization on Fall Armyworm in Africa.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, as I conclude, I wish to inform you that managing the problem of Fall armyworm is high on the agenda of H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat the African Union Commission. Fall armyworm, was an during the Africa Union Summit of January 2018 that took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Chairperson also provided an update on the developments on Fall armyworm to the Africa Union Summit of July 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania. At the Ministerial level, the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is closely working with the Commission to follow up on the Fall Armyworm challenge and food security and trade in Africa. It is therefore crucial that, together, we help all African countries to build Robust Sanitary and Phytosanitary systems that can withstand invasions of emerging pests like the Fall armyworm.

We are confident that these incremental steps will help make Africa food self-sustainable.

I thank you for listening.