

AFRICAN UNION

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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE CELEBRATION OF

SEEDS & CHIPS – THE GLOBAL FOOD INNOVATION SUMMIT

06-09 May, 2019

MILAN, ITALY

Your Excellences, Presidents of the Republic of Sa.. one of the oldest serving Republic of the whole global world,

Excellences Ministers in the house,

Mr. Piero Scarpellini, Director Pragmata Institute,

Your Excellences,

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my honour and great pleasure to bring you warm greetings from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, **H. E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**. On my own behalf and on behalf of the African Union Commission, I am honored to express appreciation to the great people and government of Italy for your most cordial welcome to the **Seeds & Chips - The Global Food Innovation Summit**, in this beautiful city of Milan, where brilliant ideas — including innovators, investors, researchers, companies, policy makers share a vision for the sustainable future. Thank you organisers, Seeds and Chips for making the Global Food Innovation Summit a reality and bringing in eminent peoples, policy makers, and private sectors together better synergy and collaboration. Thank you for the projects you carry out all over the world.

According to UN FAO, the world in general and Africa in particular is facing unprecedented challenges that affect the sustainability of our food and agriculture systems from an ever-increasing and urbanized world population to deteriorating natural resources and loss of biodiversity, to climate change impacts. Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise. Today, about 821 million – 1 in 9 people – are chronically undernourished, 1 in 3 people are malnourished and 1 in 8 adults suffer from obesity. Accelerating and scaling up innovation in agriculture can trigger the transformation needed to respond to feeding a growing and increasingly urbanized population, climate change impacts and achieve the sustainable development goals.

It is a pity for this modern world that a nuclear is created, which can destroy thousands/millions within fraction of time but not created a technology feeding millions of food insecure people. Which research and innovation is relatively easy, is it the food multiplication or the military arsenal?

The African continent is full of tremendous promise and demographically the youngest in the world. The AU designed a 50 years long-term plan called Agenda 2063 to realize “The Africa We Want” for inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Agenda calls for the diversification of sources of growth and sustenance of Africa’s current economic performance, and in the long-run, lifting large sections of our population out of poverty.

The AU ensured right from the onset that this agenda is underpinned by Science, technology and innovation as enablers of achieving the aspirations of the Africa we want! AU elaborated a Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy, (STISA -2024), to accelerate the transition of African countries to innovation-led, knowledge-based economies through deploying STI across the socio-economic development sectors. We believe that the continent requires a more responsive, stronger and more dynamic sustainable research enterprise that is important to its economy and the society. STISA-2024 identifies four mutual prerequisites for improving the STI capacities in the continent: 1. building and upgrading research infrastructure; 2. enhancing professional and technical competencies; 3. promoting entrepreneurship and innovation; and 4. creating an enabling environment for STI development at all levels, national, regional and continental.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Being conscious that our countries are at different development levels, with differentiated capacities -financial, human capital, scientific and technological, STISA-2024 identifies six multi-disciplinary socio-economic research priorities that simultaneously address the SDG goals of 2030 Agenda and the Aspirations of Agenda 2063: Priority 1-Eradication of hunger and achieve food and nutrition security; Priority 2- Prevention and control of diseases and for the wellbeing of African citizens; Priority 3-

Communication (Physical & Intellectual); Priority 4-Protection African space; Priority 5-promote living together and building communities; and Priority 6-Creation of wealth. To achieve this, we need to have sustainable food provision for our people. An African proverb says; “Good music goes with Good Food”.

The strategy, further fosters social transformation and economic competitiveness, through human capital development, innovation, value addition, industrialisation and entrepreneurship thereby contributing its role in accelerating the achievement of the SDGS. In pursuing this vision, the African Union emphasizes the importance of “building our universities as centers for excellence, as exemplified by the Pan African University.”

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Realizing Africa’s potential and aspirations depends on the investments that are made today towards the development of Africa’s children and young people. It is for this reason that the African Union places at the forefront of its priorities, the transformative role of education and training in building human capacity and to empower our youth, women and marginalized groups. Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), is a key policy tool for African Union’s Agenda 2063, aimed at fostering the skills, human capital, and education revolution in Africa.

Africa Union, further commits to ensure children are well nourished, to guarantee their ability to concentrate and learn, and ensuring sustainable source of food supply through increasingly involving local agricultures support, engaged in efforts to intensify its support to member states in the design and implementation of national, innovative school feeding programmes.

Distinguish Guests,

At the AU, we know your “food is supposed to be your medicine and your medicine is supposed to be your food”.

Understanding the importance of bio-fortification-process of breeding staple food crops that are naturally enriched with micro nutrient, and is an element of a nutrient-sensitive national agricultural research and investment strategy, AU is on the process of adopting a declaration regarding bio-fortification so as to reducing micronutrient malnutrition in Africa. Several Member States have already included bio-fortification in their official policies and programmes.

The Science Agenda for African Agriculture (S3A) developed by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in support of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration committed for improving nutritional status, and in particular, the elimination of child under-nutrition in Africa with a view to bringing down stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% by 2025.

The AU, discussing the importance of improved seeds for increasing agricultural productivity and food security in the continent, set up the African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP) to provide a strategic approach for the comprehensive development of the seed sector and related biotechnology in Africa, taking into account the different needs of the countries and regions. The programme focuses on germplasm management and development, crop research and variety release, including farmer testing/selection activities, dissemination of varieties, and production and supply of seed and planting materials through informal and formal seed systems.

The AU Programme on Infrastructure Development for Africa (PIDA) revealed different levels of infrastructure readiness to support innovation in African economies. This is also reflected in Africa’s low scores in many major classifications or indices such as the world’s leading universities, competitiveness index, and so on. Food is essential.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We need to promote the participation of our academia, research, industry, funding institutions, public and private sectors; strengthen collaboration and partnerships. The future is now and we must take appropriate action.

I believe that this summit today will not only very important to exploring solutions to feeding the future population, but also feature panels focusing on the next generation being conscious of sustainable development.

I am certain that mobilization of domestic excellence and financial resources and leveraging on external support and collaboration is vital for the unlocking the potential of youths for innovation, science Technology. Hence, Strategic partnerships and collaboration at the bilateral and multilateral levels are essential for jointly solving global challenges. We have to forge strong partnerships, driven by our shared values and policy objectives and deliver impact on the ground. Remember “if you want to go quickly, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. Remember; coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success”.

I believe that Leadership is a responsibility and we as leaders, policy makers must be able to harness our demographic dividend so as to be able to measure out impact in the light of subsidiarity and complementarity. A tree does not make a forest. A hand cannot tie a bundle and knowledge is not absolute. We need one another.

Solidarity and partnership, subsidiarity and complementarity are necessary for achieving Agenda 2063 Aspirations and the Africa We Want when we care about solutions; we care about solutions when we respond to the African challenges.

Innovation is necessary for transformation of the Africa We Want. Good and quality food, availability of food is also necessary. You know it is often said “one who eats alone cannot discuss the taste of the food with others”. “When the leg does not walk,

the stomach does not eat". My legs have walked to the shores of Milan and I hope my stomach will eat from the largest of opportunities and alternative ways of doing things positively for the overall good of our people.

We hope together we can build synergies that can make us build sustainable development for the transformation of the Africa We Want.

With these remarks, I would like to wish you all a successful summit and continued commitment to implement the outputs of this high level meeting. I hope at the end of this summit we would not be like those who ate our food, and forgot our names. That the flavour of this summit will galvanise us to greater responsibility to impact and change lives so that tomorrow we may be remembered to judge positively for our contributions during our mandate.

I thank you! Obrigado! Merci beaucoup! Gracias!