

MONDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2019

Opening Remarks

Charles Boamah, Senior Vice-President African Development Bank

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Son Excellence M. Amadou Gon Coulibaly, Premier Ministre de la République de Côte d'Ivoire ici représenté par M. Sansan Kambile, Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice de la République de Côte d'Ivoire**

**M. Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani, Ministre de l'Agriculture et du Développement Rural de la République de Côte d'Ivoire**

**Honourable Ministers;**

**Madame Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissaire en charge de l'agriculture et de l'économie rurale à la Commission de l'Union Africaine**

**M. le représentant de la Secrétaire Exécutif de la Commission Economique pour l'Afrique des Nations Unies**

**Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres, Ambassadeurs and Chef des missions diplomatiques**

**Mesdames et Messieurs, honorable invités,**

Au nom du Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, Président du Groupe de la Banque africaine de développement, je vous souhaite une chaleureuse bienvenue à cette importante conférence sur la politique foncière en Afrique.

Avant tout propos, je voudrai remercier les autorités ivoiriennes, sous l'impulsion du Premier Ministre, Chef du Gouvernement, S.E. M. Amadou Gon Coulibaly, pour tous les efforts consentis dans l'organisation de cette conférence. Merci aux co-organisateurs, nos institutions sœurs, la Commission Economique et la Commission de l'Union Africaine.

Le thème choisie pour cette conférence, à savoir, renforcer la lutte contre la corruption dans le secteur foncier Africa est très important, d'autant plus que l'Afrique regorge plus de 60% de terre non-utilisé dans le monde entier. Il va s'en dire qu'avec ce postulat, ce dont l'Afrique fait de ses terres agricoles et la manière par laquelle elle les gère aura des impacts économiques, sociales et environnementales.

Cette année marque le 10ème anniversaire de l'historique **Déclaration sur les problèmes et les défis fonciers en Afrique adopté durant le 13<sup>ème</sup> Sommet de l'Union Africaine**. La Déclaration note l'importance du foncier pour la croissance socio-économique, pour le développement et la sécurité de la vie sociale, économique de nos peuples.

Monsieur le représentant de Son Excellence M. le Premier Ministre, Chef du Gouvernement, Distingués invites, permettez-moi à ce stade de poursuivre mon allocution en anglais.

The **Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges** in Africa very wisely prioritised three key objectives:

**Land policy development and implementation;**

**Allocation of adequate budgetary resources to land management and administration;  
And the establishment of enabling conditions for institutional innovation in land policy and governance frameworks on the continent.**

As we gather here today, so much has been achieved over the past decade. And yet we know that a great deal of work still remains to be done.

Across Africa, many countries have taken up the task of reviewing their land policies and governance frameworks with a fresh perspective. We see reformers at work on efforts to enhance land productivity, efficiency, and equity.

The African Development Bank has carried out or supported considerable research in this area. The irrefutable conclusion from all this work is that **sound land policy is critical to economic growth, food security, and poverty alleviation across the continent.**

It can catalyse growth in agricultural productivity through tenure security and protection of land rights, which can in turn enhance investment opportunities in land. Indeed, impact assessments have confirmed that recent land registration in Rwanda and land certification in Ethiopia have been associated with increases in investment in the land sector in both countries.

This should come as good news for a continent which is still dependent on agriculture — one still striving to eliminate food and nutrition insecurity.

Over the past decade, the land sector in Africa has witnessed a surge in investor interest, in scale and magnitude that was unimaginable only 30 years ago.

Megatrends like climate change and growing urbanisation are only likely to increase investor interest in Africa's lands. In another **30 years**, fully half the world's agricultural land will come from Africa.

But we will first need to tackle some persistent challenges in the land sector.

We can be candid; many countries have not invested nearly enough in land policy development and governance. And so, land administration systems in many areas are characterised by poor infrastructure and management practices.

One clear consequence has been corruption. According to **Transparency International**, globally, one in five persons has paid a bribe for a land service. In Africa, every *second*, a client of a land administration service in Africa has paid a bribe.

This corruption takes many forms — bribery or illicit land transactions is just one example. Land developers and speculators specifically target countries with weak governance systems. Local powerful elites are also more likely to manipulate such systems to serve narrow ends — not to benefit the public.

The theme of this conference speaks to the challenge head on: ***‘Winning the fight against corruption in the land sector in Africa’***. Ridding the land sector of corruption is critical to the success of our development objectives: **poverty reduction, food, water, and more.**

Corruption is truly costly in every sense of the word. And it hits the poorest the hardest, particularly women and as a result, we perpetuate income and gender inequality.

And so, because of this urgent imperative for change, African Heads of State and Government, at their meeting in Sirte, Libya, in **July 2009**, began working towards the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework to support Member States develop sound land policies and governance frameworks.

Together, we have been working to establish such an institutional mechanism through the Land Policy Initiative, and its successor, the **African Land Policy Centre**. Every two years, the Centre brings together leaders in this space from across the continent. And so, I look forward to the combined knowledge and wisdom in this room to help us move forward on this agenda.

The recent surge in investor interest in land in Africa should draw our urgent attention to the importance of land registration and tenure security on the continent. Where land is not registered and tenure is not secure, it becomes impossible for efficient and transparent land markets to develop.

And we must always keep the larger picture in mind; all of our challenges are interconnected with our communities. That is why we cannot divorce land rights from the larger issues we are confronting as a society, from climate change to gender equity.

We are determined to do our part at the Bank to tackle these challenges in a systematic manner. We clearly laid out our view in our ten-year strategy:

*“Whether endowed with water, oil, land or minerals, African countries must put in place frameworks to attract the necessary investment and expertise and to install the right governance structures. They should ensure that substantial benefits go to local populations and national economies through safeguarding the environment and providing basic social services.”*

In **2013**, we established the **African Natural Resources Centre** to serve as a Centre of Excellence on natural resources management on the continent.

The Centre has worked very closely with Liberia to help build capacity of the **Liberia Land Commission**. In Togo, the Centre worked with the Government to help facilitate national dialogue on the country’s draft land policy. And across a range of other countries, from Botswana and Rwanda to Malawi and Burundi, the Centre has conducted studies aimed at informing the review of land tenure systems.

All of our efforts align with our **Feed Africa strategy** — one of our High 5 priorities, focused on transforming agriculture across Africa, and which recognises the importance of tenure security in African agricultural development and seeks to enhance investments in African agriculture, including a **25 per cent** increase in land tenure security by **2025**.

Given the centrality of land in Africa’s development, the three primary concerns of the **AU Declaration on Land** remain as relevant and urgent as ever:

We must not only deploy more financial and human resources to land policy development, we also need to explore how to harness technology and innovation to unlock the full potential of African lands. We can talk all day about collecting evidence of corruption, but we must act faster to address this challenging task, especially in rural areas and among the most vulnerable. Technology can help move the needle in this area. In Kenya, for example, ***This Is My Backyard*** or TIMBY initiative is building digital repositories of evidence and training communities in digital literacy and evidence gathering.

I have seen the incredible ingenuity of leaders in every sector across the continent. And that’s why I know we can harness technological innovations more effectively to combat corruption

in the land sector. We're home to the world's youngest population; therefore, we have a unique opportunity to combine the power of youth and technology to power Africa's development.

I'm reminded of a story of a young man named **Aboubacar Karim**, from here in Abidjan. As a teenager, Aboubacar's favourite pastime wasn't playing football. He enjoyed creating his own vegetable garden at his family home. A few years ago, Aboubacar decided to try his hand at entrepreneurship. He came up with a concept called *Airspress*, which relied on passenger flow to transport packages.

It ultimately won him the **Quebec Afro-Caribbean Award of Excellence**, leading to an invitation to participate in the **World Entrepreneurship Summit** in Kenya, attended by the likes of former **US President Barrack Obama**. Aboubacar was the youngest participant at that Summit.

Today, he is **23 years** old, but he *has* already made his mark on agriculture in West Africa. His company, *Investiv*, uses drones to provide farmers with information on soil quality, plant phytosanitary conditions, and crop development.

In just two years, his award-winning company has mapped and monitored over **8,000 hectares** of plantations, improved the management of 30 farms, and managed to create more than **20 jobs**.

I have a feeling that Aboubacar has only just gotten started on making his mark. He sees *Investiv* becoming the leader in agricultural consulting in Africa, with its data leveraged by large institutions to make strategic decisions on different agricultural sectors.

There are many young and innovative young people like Aboubacar among us today. They suggest to us new ways of thinking about our fundamental challenges. Their youth affords them a fresh perspective on seemingly intractable problems.

We have many forward-thinking experts here today fortunately; my challenge to all of us is to continue thinking outside the box for solutions. Think of all the technologies that can help us improve land use in so many ways: drones, blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, geographic information systems, and much more.

At the African Development Bank, we are committed to keep innovating in order to catapult African agriculture into the 21st century. Our **Transformation of African Agricultural Technologies** program has worked with **30** seed companies to produce **27,000 metric tonnes** of drought-resistant maize seeds. By the end of **2018**, more than **1.6 million** farmers had planted these seeds.

Our **Connect Africa** initiative — a **\$55 billion** global partnership to bridge major gaps in ICT infrastructure across the continent — is allowing farmers to use digital technology to access prices and services like mobile banking. And in keeping with our mission, we have established an innovation hub in Tunisia for the use of drones in agricultural development projects.

Agriculture remains the backbone of many African economies. But to successfully transform and build a 21st-century approach in this space, we ***need*** sound land policy and administration.

With the assembled talent and passion in this room, I know we can drive change.

Let's pick up the new tools available to us today — and let's write the next great chapter in agro-industrial transformation and indeed the next great chapter for Africa.

Thank you very much for your attention.