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**OPENING STATEMENT BY**

**H.E. MRS. AMIRA ELFADIL  
COMMISSIONER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**AT THE AFRICAN LEADERS FOR NUTRITION  
HIGH-LEVEL DINNER**

**SKYLIGHT HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA  
19:00 – 21:00HRS, 8 FEBRUARY 2020**

- **Honourable Lesego Makgothi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Representing His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the African Union Champion for Nutrition**
- **Her Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia**
- **His Excellency Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of the Republic of Burkina Faso**
- **His Excellency Mogweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana**
- **His Excellency Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire**
- **His Excellency Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar**
- **His Excellency Mahamadou Issouffou, President of the Republic of Niger**
- **Her Excellency Rebecca Akufo-Addo, First Lady of the Republic of Ghana**
- **Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank**
- **Honourable Ministers**
- **Ambassadors**
- **Heads of UN Agencies**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, it is my singular honor and pleasure to welcome all distinguished guest, particularly our eminent members, of the Africa Leaders for Nutrition Initiative, to this important High Level Dinner Event, during which, we shall focus our attention on the value of investing in nutrition for growth and development.

While it is pleasing to note that some member states are making some progress in addressing malnutrition in all its forms, a lot remain to be done, to achieve the nutrition targets set by the World Health Assembly by 2025 and the SDG targets by 2030. The Commission has continued to make progress in the implementation of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy, and in partnership with FAO undertook '*A Continental Mapping of Nutrition Policies, Interventions and Actors*', the findings and recommendations were presented and adopted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> STC on Health, Population and Drug Control. The STC also has requested the Commission to develop a Continental Nutrition Report and to report on nutrition from an African continental perspective, and to highlight on the progress that has been made through the African Union led initiative "Cost of Hunger in Africa Study", that has been undertaken by 18 member states, with support of WFP.

Under the leadership of HM, King Letsie the III Head of State of the Kingdom of Lesotho and Africa Union Nutrition champion, and in close partnership with the African Development Bank, the Commission held a successful consultation with the private sector, and a cross sectional representation of parliamentarians from African Parliaments, including the Pan-African Parliament, to deliberate on strengthened private sector and parliamentary engagement for food security and nutrition, in October 2019. The recommendations of this consultation have contributed to an ongoing Continental Initiative of the Commission on Sustainable School Food and Nutrition programs for Africa, which is being undertaken with support of FAO. The Commission is preparing its member state engagement, in the 53rd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) taking place in April of 2020, under the theme “Population, Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Development” and is receiving support from UNECA, UNFPA, FAO, IFPRI and WFP.

To achieve our collective goals, national ownership of the nutrition agenda is key, and as such, governments are encouraged to allocate more domestic financing, ensure value for money and increase accountability of nutrition interventions. The Commission further encourages that specific nutrition interventions, are included, as part of the Universal Health Coverage agenda, and to take into account the multi-sectoral approach, needed to address nutrition, including the building of nutrition-specific resilience at country level, especially in fragile states.

The Nutrition for Growth Summit 2020 which will be hosted by the Government of Japan, at the end of the year, is one such opportunity to renew commitments for nutrition. We need to find innovative ways of funding nutrition interventions, which may appear to be costly today, but the benefits to society, will exceed the immediate costs especially in the long term. With strong financial commitments for nutrition together we can address the issues of stunting, the triple burden of malnutrition, under nutrition, micronutrient deficiency and obesity especially as these conditions affect our children and their future economic prospects

Allow me to conclude by commending our continued partnership for nutrition, all present in this room, and to recognize the leading role of our Africa Nutrition Champion, King Letsie III and of the African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) Initiative, to enhance accountability for nutrition. The 2063 aspiration for the continent, to be healthy and well-nourished, shall only be achieved through ensuring that food security and the nutritional needs, of all citizens, of all ages are fully and adequately met.

It is my hope that this High Level meeting will help shape the shared understanding and collective expectations for the 2020 Nutrition for Growth Summit in Tokyo.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations and I thank all partners for their support you all for your kind attention.