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Talking Points

by

Her Excellency TUMUSIIME Rhoda Peace,

Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

Africa Union Commission

**at the Signing Ceremony of the MOU between AUC and Action Aid
International**

12 July 2011

Mr. Tennyson Williams, The International Director for Action AID, West and Central Africa

-The Acting Director Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture,

- Representatives of other AUC Departments,

-Staff of DREA,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. We are all aware of the challenges that face Africa in the area of agriculture and rural economy including inadequate production and productivity; poor rural infrastructure and limited market access; environment-dependant agriculture and institutional deficiencies as well as disabling policy related issues. These challenges have impacted more on the poor and vulnerable (unemployed youth, women and children) through increased food prices leading to riots and political instability in some countries.
2. This uneasy state of affairs, now as before, calls for more concerted collaborative efforts in developing and harnessing strategic partnerships with all actors to address the challenges in a comprehensive way such as supporting local community participation and the empowerment of rural producers. This requires increased civil society and private sector engagement to work together with governments and partners in boosting investment in agriculture, environment, natural resources management, including developing responses to the consequences of climate change and desertification.
3. The Commission of the African Union welcomes the signing of the MOU with Action Aid International which provides an opportunity for the Commission through the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) to build synergies and complement its efforts in lobbying and advocacy at various levels at which Action Aid International operates: local, national, regional and international.
4. In addition to lobbying and advocacy, my department will continue to provide the desired political leadership; facilitate policy coherence, harmonization and coordination required in addressing the challenges related to agriculture, rural development, environment and natural resources to strengthen the agricultural sector, rural economies and the environment in order to improve the livelihoods of the African people and ensure poverty eradication. This vast mandate which is being addressed in the AU Commission's strategic pillar of "Integration, Development and Cooperation", can effectively be handled in collaboration with Member States, RECs, African Institutions, Parliamentarians, Traditional and

Religious Leaders, Women, Youth and Children, Academia, Researchers, Civil Society Groups, Private Sector and Development Partners.

5. I would also like to use the occasion of the signing of this MOU to encourage ACTION AID within the context of this MOU to use the occasion to liaise and work with other DREA regional technical agencies, located in various regions of Africa, which address specialized issues and needs of Africa such as the Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR) based in Nairobi, Kenya; the Inter African Phyto-Sanitary Council (IAPSC) based in Yaoundé, Cameroon; the Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (PANVAC) based in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia; the Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control and Eradication Campaign (PATTEC) based at the AUC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the Semiarid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and the Fouta Djallon Highlands Integrated Natural Resources Project (FDH) based in Conakry, Guinea. At the Headquarters, we also have within the department two specialized projects, the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) both linked to the Division of Environment Climate Change, Water and Land Management.
6. The signing of this MOU is needed to formalize the collaboration between the two institutions which have been working closely in earnest. The African Union Commission through the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture appreciates the role of Action Aid International in chairing the CAADP Non-State Actors Forum. The Forum's significance in mobilising civil society organisations including farmers' organisations and other stakeholders to take forward the CAADP agenda can not be over-emphasised.
7. I would also like to draw synergies and complementarities between DREA's other programmes such as ClimDev Programme, DRR, the Africa Risk Capacity and Action Aid International's work on reducing vulnerability of poor communities by working together on building their resilience to future disasters. Action Aid also supports communities to adapt to the effects of climate change. Drawing from the technical and financial capacity of Action Aid International, the two institutions should work together in sharing and disseminating information as well as upscaling best practices and success stories of Member States.
8. At this juncture, I would also like to commend the Action AID Hunger Free' five-year campaign whose objective is to ensure governments around the world honour their promises to halve global hunger by 2015. This action fully complements and is in line with the 5-year vision of a food secure Africa through the Food Basket Initiative championed by the previous Chair of AU H.E. Bingu Wa Mutharika, the President of Malawi championed.
9. In furtherance of the said vision, the 17th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda mandated the Commission together with the NPCA and Partners, to take necessary steps to

develop and coordinate the implementation of a strategy to take forward the vision of a food secure Africa within five (5) years.

10. In addition, the 17th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union in Kampala, Uganda endorsed the 30th of October every year as the Africa Food and Nutrition Security Day and I would like to call upon Action Aid International to create awareness, popularise, mobilise and enhance the buy-in by the civil society and Private Sector to actively participate in the organization and commemoration of the Annual Africa Food and Nutrition Security Day.
11. Before I conclude, let me highlight the leadership role of the African Union Commission through the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture in the area of climate change and Natural Resources Management and specifically the preparations for CoP 17 where Africa will have a Pavilion to showcase the work of Member States and other stakeholders including, RECs, Private Sector, Civil Society Groups like Action Aid International, in the area of climate change. The AUC is also in the process of updating Africa's Common Position on climate change and I would like to call upon Action Aid International to mobilize Non State Actors to participate in the negotiation meetings but also and more importantly create awareness, popularise, mobilise and enhance the buy-in to the updated African Common Position at all levels of the negotiation process. I am banking on your usual support to bring in a critical mass of voices as we showcase the achievements of Africa in the African Pavilion in Durban in December, 2011.
12. Finally, I would like to thank Action Aid International for its willingness to work with the African Union Commission through the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture and. Look forward to a close working relationship.
13. Thank you all for your attention.