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STATEMENT

BY

HER EXCELLENCY MRS. TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE
COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN AFRICA (FARA)



OR TAMBO CONFERENCE CENTRE, BIRCHWOOD HOTEL

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

26 NOVEMBER, 2014

Thank you, Dr. Irene Annour-Frempong, Master of Ceremonies

Good morning.

Our Guest Speaker, Dr. Shadrak Moephuli, who is the Head of the Agricultural Research Council

The Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) Dr Charity Kruger

Dr Yemi Akinbamijo, Executive Director FARA

Distinguished Personalities, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I will welcome you all. I see the occasion is well attended. I stand here with honour and pleasure on behalf of the African Union Commission to convey to you warm greetings and best wishes and more importantly to say a hearty congratulations to the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) on its 15th Anniversary. At the same time, I wish to salute all of you who have been part of the journey that FARA has traversed over the years in coordinating and advocating for agricultural science, research, technology and innovation. We are very happy that, indeed, FARA has been a credible and formidable pillar institution in our common pursuit of the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). It is a positive coincidence that FARA's 15th Anniversary is, indeed, coinciding with the 10th Anniversary of CAADP and within the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security and also the International Year of Family Farming. This heightens the call for sustained efforts to scale up agricultural research, innovation and technology and making them accessible to a greater majority of African farmers and especially smallholder farmers with a view to increasing their production and productivity with the

ultimate objective of ensuring a food and nutrition secure and poverty free Africa.

At this juncture, I must commend the choice of the theme, that is: **Delivering Africa's Future Through Science-led Agricultural Transformation**. This is part of our collective effort to actualize the commitments undertaken by the AU Heads of State and Government in June this year in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in what we call the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated African Agricultural Growth and Transformation. As you may all know, our leaders committed themselves to:

- upholding the principles of CAADP including continuing to allocate proportionate budgetary resources to agriculture;
- boosting both public and private finance and investment in agriculture;
- ending hunger by 2025;
- boosting intra-African trade as part of the AU continental integration agenda and especially in agricultural products;
- enhancing resilience of households, communities and nations against climate change, disaster risks and market shocks;
- applying mutual accountability and, to this end, they directed that there must be a review of progress every two years and also reporting back.

I am sure that many of you have looked at the Malabo Declaration but I cannot tire to talk about it because it will guide our processes going forward.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to restate my personal conviction that the rudimentary technologies of hoes and cutlasses have long overstayed their welcome in our Agricultural sector. Times have changed and we must march forward with force to deal with emerging and contemporary scenarios in our agri-food sector. I fail to see the logic of using arithmetic solutions to deal with problems of geometric dimensions. I salute the strategic role of FARA in facilitating connecting, coordinating and communicating science in African agriculture. I believe that an event like this with the presence of all the FARA stakeholders and partners afford the opportunities to rework the numbers that will help us make the **ESSENTIAL** shifts in African agriculture. I am aware of the efforts to rebrand FARA and we must applaud the same. This rebranding should not be in the visual arts only. I encourage you to bring in your rebranding philosophy into your contributions to a Food and Nutrition Secure Africa. Africa and Africans have waited too long for science led innovation in agriculture. As a matter of fact we are the last continent to tap into this new thinking.

FARA remains the technical arm of the African Union Commission on issues of Agricultural Sciences and Technology. We will continue to support your efforts in your renewed efforts to bring the Power of Science to bear on our farming systems and the associated value chains. I am convinced more than ever before that if we will change the statistics and associated socio-economic scenarios, it will take science. I am particularly happy to note the inclusion of the CGIAR-led Open space Agricultural Technology intervention at this event. It is my hope that issues around how to evoke biological and mechanical advantages that will help Africa leapfrog into food self-sufficiency will emerge from your efforts.

In all this, the role of science, research, innovation and technology is key as it is also critical in the overall Africa Agenda 2063 aimed at an integrated and prosperous Africa that is also a dynamic force in the global arena; an Africa which is able to feed itself and to feed the world. The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, the National, Sub-Regional and Regional Agricultural Research Organisations as well as the Institutions of Higher Learning are expected to make a significant contribution in this regard and that is why we are all here. Thank you all for coming and for working together. We need to enhance this collaboration if we are to realize the agricultural transformation that African leaders and citizens aspire for.

Yesterday, as I was interacting with the young men and women in the Big Brother House, they did raise issues of having modern technology driving the agricultural sector and I told them that I am here to engage with scientists and researchers to change the face of agriculture on the African continent.

In January next year, the AU Policy Organs will be adopting the Strategy and Roadmap for the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Africa Agriculture Growth and Transformation for improved livelihoods and shared prosperity to ensure a robust future. We will look forward to working with you all more closely in taking this forward and sustaining the CAADP momentum.

Once again, congratulations to FARA and best of luck to FARA and all of us here and the constituencies that we represent. We need to renew our resolve to ensure that our efforts produce the results and impacts that will match the enormous potential of our continent and the rising

demand occasioned by mega trends including but not limited to population growth, urbanisation, globalisation, climate change and others which are often seen as challenges but actually they can be turned into opportunities.

Thank you.