

WELCOME ADDRESS

BY

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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE: RESEARCH TO FEED AFRICA

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Dr Jean Lebel, President of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC); to the distinguished IDRC MPs , distinguished representatives of Foreign affairs, trade and development, Canada

Honourable Ministers:

Executive ambassadors

Distinguished participants

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this high-level policy dialogue on research to feed Africa. I wish to register the appreciation of the commissioner of the African Union to the Canadian International food Security Research Fund for organizing this important dialogue and for associating us. I am also happy to see my sister Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda facilitating this important event and I thank you for the great work you are doing for our continent.

Indeed we are very pleased to mark this event as one of the key engagements in the 2014 AU Year of the Agriculture and Food Security also marking the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programmed (CAADP) – our Member States’ overarching agriculture framework for ensuring a food and nutrition secure and Prosperous Africa.

We are meeting at a time when the Heads of State and Government of the African Union have just adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated African Agricultural Growth of Transformation by which they committed themselves to the principles and values of the CADDP process , and, more specifically, to:

- Enhancing investment finance in Agriculture
- Ending hunger by 2025
- Having poverty by 2015 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation
- Boosting intra-African trade in Agricultural commodities and services
- Enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks: and
- Mutual accountability
- To actions and results

The agricultural transformation agenda that we have thus all committed to calls for harnessing the best technologies, building the required infrastructure , developing effective institutions and crafting appropriate policies with a view to realizing the full potential for the continent’s agrifood systems to contribute to broad-based economic growth and Job creation and, in so doing, to shared prosperity and improved livelihoods for a growing and thriving African populations, especially, its majority who are youth and women.

To deliver on this vision, our leaders also adopted the science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A) that should cut across entire value chains of the agrifood systems and help, over the next 10 years:

- Double Agricultural productivity,
- Halve post-harvest losses,
- Develop strategic agrifood commodities value chains, including the agro-processing and agribusiness stages of these value chains,
- Triple intra-African trade in agricultural products and services
- Make at least 30% of farm, pastoral and fisher households resilient to climate change and weather-related risks, and
- Eliminate child under nutrition by curbing stunting to 10% and underweight to 5%.

We welcome all stakeholders and our partners, including the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund, to work with us in this compelling agricultural transformation drive. We know that the science, research, innovation and technology are at the core of this transformation agenda, which aims at not only feeding Africa, but also at the generating broader prosperity and making the continent a major player in the global arena in line with the vision of the African Union and the aspirations in Africa Agenda 2063. We are keen to enhance the capabilities of our institutions across the continent to engage in this drive and transform their scientific research findings and innovations into applicable models for African Farmers, especially smallholders. Of course we expect FARA to lead the delivery of this vision.

This is what Dr Norman Borlaug was talking about in his last words: **“Take it to the farmer”**

And, beyond the farmer, we need to take research to the Africa’s agro-industry and agribusiness actors. We also need to bridge the gaps between Research and Policy making, hence the pertinence of this dialogue. Our educational institutions need to be supported with adequate reforms as to build a critical mass of professionals to advance the science agenda for agricultural transformations. In other words, we need to build on what the late Emeritus Michigan State University Professor Carl Eicher referred to as the agricultural transformation in Africa

It is done and followed through; Africa will cease to be stereotyped as lagging behind in applications of fertilizers, improved varieties and modern technologies. It is only then that the theme: “Research to Feed Africa” will become reality

Once again, welcome.

I look forward to a fruitful dialogue and thank you for your kind attention.