

AFRICAN UNION

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STATEMENT

BY

Her Excellency Mrs. Josefa L. C. Sacko

COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE OCCASION OF

The 2017 Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board

WFP Headquarters

Rome, Italy

12 June 2017

Your Excellence Anil Wadhwa, President of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme;

Your Excellence Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of WFP;

Excellences Distinguished Members of the WFP Board;

Excellences Ambassadors;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my honour and pleasure to address this 2017 Opening Session of the World Food Program (WFP) Executive Board on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellence Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, who sends his greetings and regrets that he is not able to be personally here with you today. As you are well aware, the African continent is grappling with several humanitarian and political crises and since assumption of office, the Chairperson has been preoccupied with consultations with various continental and global leaders to find ways to mitigate the crises. The new African Union Commission leadership is dealing with a landscape riddled with major crises, including terrorism, civil conflicts, migration of the youth, strained economies, climate change effects and millions of people who are threatened by famine.

Before I proceed, please allow me to use this opportunity to recognize and appreciate WFP for the continued support you have accorded to hundreds of millions of our vulnerable populations during the various crises that afflict the continent. I thank the WFP for this partnership with African Union Member States to provide food assistance to displaced and resident populations, especially children, faced by hunger, disease and vulnerability. Thank you for being a major partner to our governments and public institutions by providing technical advice, guidance and critical information and developing capacities for better programming, implementation of projects and delivery of services. You have been with us from the onset as we envisioned a peaceful and prosperous continent in Africa's Agenda 2063. You have also been with us in the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) – continent's agenda for transforming Africa's agriculture to achieve food and nutrition security and sustainable broad-based economic growth.

Statistics indicating the levels of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition in Africa are staggering. The sheer fact that close to 800 million of the world's hungry live in Africa, is very discomfoting. Every day we wake up to the reality that about 25 percent of our African population (around 245 million) do not have enough food to meet their basic food and nutrition needs. Between 30 to 40 percent of children under 5 year of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies. Our farming systems are dominated by smallholders who make 90 percent of the rural poor and make up the majority of the world's hungry population.

Awakened by this grim reality, a group of International and African Leaders made a Declaration on the "Renewed Partnership for a Unified Approach for Ending Hunger in Africa within the CAADP Framework" in July 2013. The need for working together is now even greater. This call, combined with the United Nation's Zero Hunger Challenge, places a renewed impetus on all of us to work together towards a hunger-free Africa.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I also wish to recognize the role of WFP as the world's leading food assistance agency and hail the success of the Purchase for Progress program that has enabled hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers to increase production and access markets. It's this kind of partnership that is supporting Africa's efforts to transform agriculture toward our CAADP target of eliminating hunger by 2025. As you can see, Africa's target is more ambitious than the UN target under the Sustainable Development Goal of eliminating hunger by 2030.

We also recognize that WFP is also supporting capacity development. The African Risk Capacity (ARC) – a pan-African risk pool with a membership of 32 Member States of the African Union – is working to improve country capacities to plan, prepare and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters such as drought, floods and cyclones. It was established with the support of WFP. Furthermore, WFP is also supporting the AU in the implementation of the continental knowledge generation through the Cost of Hunger in Africa study (COHA), which provides member states with evidence needed to prioritize investments in nutrition. Additionally, WFP's competence in vulnerability analysis and mapping, as well as in planning for interventions aimed at eliminating hunger, malnutrition and poverty, is critical for the

African Union. We need to position ourselves to increase the technical capacities of our Member States and regional institutions through these technical partnerships.

WFP is also leading the way in implementing school feeding programmes together with national governments around the continent. I am pleased to inform you that in the January 2016 AU Summit, a decision was made that recognized school feeding, and called for its recognition and commemoration of its achievements on annual basis – on March 1 – the Africa Day of School Feeding. I am aware that WFP has been working with us and has even resourced a study for assessing the needs and identifying the major gaps and entry points for scaling up and implementing home-grown school feeding programmes at national level. I am also aware that AU and WFP facilitated a continental consultation that brought together seven Ministers and experts from 30 countries last month to discuss progress of continental scale up of school feeding programs. The support from WFP and its Centre of Excellence is commendable, so we encourage WFP to continue implementing projects within the context of South-South Cooperation Agreements.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me answer two lingering questions that might be resonating in your mind; what is the AU Commission doing and what does it intend to do to improve its cooperation with WFP, the Rome-Based Agencies; and how have we positioned ourselves to coordinate and guide our Member States to implement multi-sectorial programmes aimed at ending hunger and eliminating poverty and malnutrition.

I am pleased to underscore that food security is the second priority of the African Union after peace and security. The Union dedicated 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security. It is in that year that our Heads of State and Government made the bold commitment in the Malabo declaration for ending hunger by 2025. At continental level, we have since developed a five year AU CAADP Business Plan for the implementation of the Malabo declaration. We have also developed an accompanying detailed Operational Plan. At national level, we are working with the NEPAD agency and the regional economic communities to support AU member states to integrate the Malabo commitments into revised or updated national agricultural investment plans (NAIPs).

Our continent is currently gripped with man-made and economic crises that have largely thwarted developmental efforts, peace and security, and worsened the humanitarian situation. Our Chairperson since his assumption of duty at the helm of the AU Commission, has given this area due focus. He has visited the current hotspots facing famine. He is also working tirelessly and consulting with experts and national governments on implementing strategies for eliminating terrorist activities in Africa. Just a few days ago, the Chairperson of the Commission completed a two-day visit to Mauritania in a bid to ensure that the AU's support to regional efforts for combatting terrorism and promoting lasting peace and stability, have gained traction.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The AU's theme for 2017 is "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend by Investing in Youth". With a growing population of the youth on the continent, there is the potential to spur economic growth through harnessing this potential as it presents a great opportunity to building resilience of young people and addressing the root causes of many of the key challenges facing Africa, including forced migration, radicalization and violent extremism.

It is with this in mind that I also introduce the AU's youth volunteer program, which is geared to promoting and preparing young Africans for the job market by giving them short opportunities to work in your organisations. I welcome you, Excellence the Executive Director, to partner with the AU to give our youth an opportunity to grow and prosper as global civil servants.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would to assure the WFP Executive Board, in particular, and the entire body of our Development Partners at large, that the AU Commission will support the new WFP leadership and Strategic vision articulated in the Strategic Plan and encourage our Member States to leverage WFP's experiences, capacities and technical strengths in integrating food security and nutrition objectives into the transformative National Agricultural Investment Plans, poverty eradication strategies and development agenda. We recognize that the new WFP Strategic Plan is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and our 2030 Action Plan for Africa's Agenda 2063. Therefore, it is within our interest to collaborate with WFP in this endeavour, so that we leave no

one behind. I would like to call upon WFP, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to support my Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) in our efforts of supporting AU member states to revise or update their national agricultural investment plans.

In conclusion, the AU Commission expresses its gratitude to the leadership of WFP for inviting the Chairperson to this Session of the Executive Board. This is a great partnership spirit that must be continued. Before I end, I wish to recognise and appreciate the WFP Addis Ababa-based Office to the AU, which works ever so closely with us and has remained our key interlocutor with WFP. I commend their work and support to the AU.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to the outcomes of the Session.