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STATEMENT

**ADS International Webinar
Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food systems**

**24 May 2022
9:00-10:30am (EST)
15:00-16:30 (SAST)
16:00-17:30 (EAT)
Zoom**

Check against delivery

- Mrs. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations
- Ms. Cristina Duarte, USG and Special Adviser on Africa
- Dr. Vera Songwe, USG and Executive Secretary of the UNECA

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most honoured to participate in the 2022 edition of the Africa Dialogue Series. Indeed, the ADS has proven to be a relevant platform for knowledge incubation and exchange and in line with the main theme of the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on “*Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent*”. This International Webinar on Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food systems is aptly crafted to allow me to briefly share thoughts on the need for a consolidated African Food Security and Nutrition programme that is well resourced to tackle Africa’s food challenges.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

While Africa is yet to fully recover from the socio-economic repercussions which came out of the ongoing global pandemic of COVID-19, the current Russia-Ukraine conflict does not only land another major setback to the global economy but also the African continent.

Since the start of the conflict, global wheat, sunflower, and crude oil prices have soared to previously unheard-of heights which if continues will pull-back Africa into increased poverty wiping away some of the steady gains made by the African continent to overcome challenges, strengthen our economies and build strong institutions that will advance democratic principles.

The increased extent and intensity of hunger and malnutrition in Africa, particularly among women and children and vulnerable groups, is a story we know. On the other hand, we also recognise the numerous successes undertaken by African governments in tackling hunger and malnutrition. However, the imperative and urgency to drive change that will enable communities to realise zero hunger for their populations by 2025 cannot be over emphasized.

The looming food crises in Africa will only amplify the apparent urgency for policy and investment choices to be made for increased access to nutritious food and addressing

structural weaknesses and vulnerability, including poverty and inequality, which are part of the problems blocking access to nutritious diets for all.

There is an urgent need for an African Union led initiative to support member states response to this looming food and nutrition insecurity in Africa. Whilst we also embrace the UN Food Systems Summit momentum, AUDA-NEPAD places emphases on the urgent need for policy and investment choices that will transform local capacities and build resilient and inclusive food systems. These choices must be made and requires a consolidated African Food Security and Nutrition programme. In this regard, AUDA-NEPAD's Food Security and Nutrition programme is providing the continental programmatic scope and tool to foster basic conditions to address food and nutrition challenges. And we wholeheartedly invite the United Nations system particularly the Rome-based UN Agencies to support the AUDA-NEPAD programme on Food Systems.

The Programme is designed to empower systemic local ownership and responsibility. Therefore, all initiatives, including bilateral and multilateral collaborations on building resilient and inclusive food systems, must be integral to existing national structures and plans beginning with National Development Plans of African governments. At the regional and continental level, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) – Malabo Declaration, Agenda 2063 and other sector plans such as Climate Change, Healthcare and Education Plans, should remain the frameworks within which food security and nutrition should be pursued.

The Programme will also ensure that a mechanism to mobilise and enable community participation in agricultural value-chains are in place. Frontline and grassroots players and stakeholders through technology will require information support and training, access to appropriate forms of investment capital, facilitation and support on aspects such as standards, packaging and marketing will all be pivotal towards the food systems value-chains.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

As the Development Agency of the African Union, AUDA-NEPAD is currently working towards the full operationalisation of the AUDA-NEPAD Development Fund as directed by 35th African Union Summit. This flagship funding instrument aims to expand resource mobilisation efforts and innovative financing mechanisms by developing and managing flexible fund models to increase sustainable development resources for Africa's most pressing priorities.

It is an opportunity to use this basket fund as an alternative resource mobilisation tool, to mobilise funds towards address Africa's looming food and nutrition crises.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude, let me point out one issue of critical importance in our collective efforts to support economic growth and development initiatives in Africa. This is the issue of COORDINATION. Where efforts are fragmented, even well intended programmes end up less effective, very low value-for-money and often piecemeal in content and therefore simply unsustainable. It is my wish that as we deliberate further, the panellists and the open discussions will examine the issue of coordination and systems approaches which also recognize and enable practical solutions not only on **Human Capital Development or on Climate or Energy or Food systems, BUT in an integrated manner addressing solutions that cut across addressing the linkages and inter-dependencies.**

Indeed, these are unprecedented times for the African Continent, and it is my fervent hope that the thematic outputs emanating from the month-long Africa Dialogue Series will strategically allow our institutions to refocus our work towards addressing the Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food systems linkages.

Thank you and I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

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