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**Opening of the Africa Dialogue Series**

**May 03, 2022**

**Virtual**

**Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

- It's a pleasure for me to welcome you all to the 2022 Africa Dialogue Series on the theme “Build resilience in nutrition: Accelerate Africa's human capital and socio-economic development”.
- This year's theme this theme is aligned with the AU theme of the year ‘Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent’.
- It is a recognition that an enhanced agricultural sector is vital to sustainable development, food security, and poverty reduction through its direct impact on job creation and increasing opportunities, especially for women and youth in Africa. And that without the development of agriculture, no amount of effort will transform the continent to overcome poverty and achieve sustainable development.
- Africa has prioritized agriculture and food security as the basis for socio-economic development as it has the potential to be the breadbasket of the world. The continent has the largest share of the world's uncultivated arable land, unlike many other parts of the world, in Africa, there is room for agriculture to expand.
- Locally, demand exists and is growing, not only for raw, primary food staples but also for higher-end agri-food products.
- The continent also has the fastest growing young population and the highest rate of urbanization in the world, along with a growing middle class, all these factors are a rising demand for improved quality of food products.

- Globally, we have seen disruptions in food chains driven by man-made and natural disasters. We must recognize the need to expand our options and increase global interest in the untapped potential that exists in our region.
- Data has shown that Africa could produce two to three times more cereals and grains, which would add 20 percent more cereals and grains to the current worldwide 2.6 billion tons of output.
- In the same vein, Agriculture will remain a trigger for economic growth, with a prime responsibility for creating jobs for a rapidly growing youthful population. The agricultural value chain provides multiple entry points and pathways for advancing Africa's transformative agenda toward a green economy and low carbon development. It has been estimated that for Africa south of the Sahara, growth generated by agriculture is more effective in reducing poverty than growth in any other sector.
- It is against this backdrop, and within the framework of AUDA-NEPAD, that we have adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).
- The CAADP Programme is instrumental for alignment and harmonization of efforts in support of African agriculture and overcoming challenges such as ending hunger by 2025; reducing Africa's vulnerability to naturally occurring shocks and; having a high performing, deep and broad agri-food market. It aims to ensure that resources, policies, and institutions get in a better position to deliver and positively impact the food systems and livelihoods of African people.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- Africa is determined to turn climate challenges into opportunities, especially those that improve agricultural performance and enhance capacity to facilitate broad-based poverty reduction and food security for all.
- The development of modern food systems and increasing agricultural productivity have long been given priority. The provision of infrastructures such as rural roads, irrigation, and market access plays a vital role in enhancing the productivity of the sector.
- Ensuring that small farmers are equipped with affordable improved seeds, extension services, and technology packages, as well as affordable financing, will increase their crop production beyond subsistence. We therefore call on all our partners, to boost its support in these areas as well.

#### **Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

- While we recognize that challenges exist, we must also take advantage of the opportunities. We have no choice but to be firm in our actions and committed to addressing climate change and revert to harnessing renewable sources of energy if we intend to increase food production and sustainably achieve food security while preserving our environment.
- Agriculture holds the key to Africa's development, and development holds the key to a future where Africa is not only feeding itself but also helps feed the world. We must therefore keep the sector high on our national development plans and strategies.
- To Address all these issues and much more, over the coming four weeks, the ADS in partnership with key stakeholders will shed more lights and discuss in depth the nexus

between Agriculture, food systems, nutrition and other critical factors, under four sub-themes of the ADS-2022, namely:

1. Building Resilient Socio-Agricultural Food Systems: The Key to Nutrition;
  2. Strengthening the Resilience of Farming Systems: Land, Digital Transformation and Access to Finance – Making Small Holder Farmers the Back Bones ;
  3. Social Protection, Resilience and Nutrition; and
  4. Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food Systems.
- While looking forward to the next few weeks, let me take the opportunity, on behalf of the conveners of ADS, to thank our partners [ FAO, WFP, ILO, AGRA, UNECA and AUDA-NEPAD] for their valuable contribution and tireless efforts to enrich the content of this year's dialogue.

I wish you a fruitful 2022 Africa Dialogue Series, I thank you for your kind attention!