

**STATEMENT OF HER EXCELLENCY TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE  
COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE  
AT THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**ON THE OCCASION OF HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON WATER AND CLIMATE  
CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SDGS -COP 21**

**Paris, FRANCE**

**2 December 2015**

- **Hon. Amadou Mansour Faye-AMCOW President, Minister for Hydraulic & Sanitation-Senegal**
- **Honourable ministers present**
- **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

I FEEL HONORED AND PLEASED TO BE IN YOUR MIDST THIS AFTERNOON ON THE OCCASION OF HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SDGS

I BRING TO YOU WARM GREETINGS AND THE APPRECIATION OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION FOR YOUR INTEREST IN AFRICA'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND THE IMPORTANT ROLE AFRICA PLAYED IN MOBILIZING AFRICA VOICE IN THE SDGS.

- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A REALITY AND NO LONGER A FUTURE CONCERN. THERE IS EMERGING GLOBAL CONSENSUS THAT CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT FACING MANKIND TO-DAY. MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES EXPERIENCE CYCLES OF DROUGHT, FLOODING AND OTHER EXTREME CLIMATIC EVENTS THAT CAUSE DAMAGE, SUFFERING AND DISRUPTION TO THEIR POPULATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE MOST VULNERABLE AND POOR. THESE CLIMATIC EVENTS HAVE SERIOUS ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES, WHICH CAN DERAIL A GOVERNMENT'S BEST INTENTIONS AND SET BACK PROGRESS IN DEVELOPMENT BY YEARS. SUCH EXPERIENCES PROVIDE A SOBER WARNING OF WHAT COULD BE IN STORE IN FUTURE WITH THE CLIMATIC CHANGES THAT INCREASINGLY SEEM LIKELY. FOR MANY COUNTRIES, CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLIES THE WORSENING OF ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR CLIMATIC FLUCTUATIONS, AND LONG TERM CHANGES IN CLIMATE WHICH COULD INTRODUCE NEW RISKS AND THREATS TO THE VIABILITY OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT.

## **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**

### **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

AS YOU ALL KNOW, ISSUES OF WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE ARE NOW CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE HEAD OF STATES AND GOVERNMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION, SINCE THE JULY 2008 SHARM EL SHEIKH DECLARATION ON ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION GOALS IN AFRICA. IN PARTICULAR, THE DECLARATION CALLS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO PUT IN PLACE ADAPTATION MEASURES AND INVESTMENT PLANS TO IMPROVE THE RESILIENCE OF COUNTRIES TO THE INCREASING THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND VARIABILITY TO

WATER RESOURCES, AND TO ENHANCE CAPACITY TO MEET WATER AND SANITATION TARGETS.

- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

MY PRESENCE HERE TODAY IN THIS OPENING CEREMONY, IS AN INDICATION OF THE FACT THAT THE AFRICAN UNION IS AWARE THAT ONE OF THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING POLICY- AND DECISION-MAKERS IS TO UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT WATER RESOURCE SITUATION AND TRENDS IN THE FACE OF THE INCREASED UNCERTAINTIES BROUGHT ABOUT BY CLIMATE CHANGE.

STRATEGIES, PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND INVESTMENTS THAT PROMOTE SOUND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ARE A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY OF DELIVERING IMMEDIATE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS WHILE BUILDING RESILIENCE TO LONGER TERM CLIMATE CHANGE. WATER IS AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES ACROSS MOST SECTORS – HEALTH, ENERGY, AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL PROTECTION, AND OTHERS – YET MOST AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE FAR FROM ACHIEVING WATER SECURITY, AND THE ONSET OF CLIMATE CHANGE WILL FURTHER COMPROMISE PROSPECTS. ENSURING WATER SECURITY THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE WATER MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTES TO DEVELOPMENT GOALS, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, PARTICULARLY FLOODS AND DROUGHT-RELATED DISASTERS.

- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE WHICH I HEAD, IS ONE AMONG THE 8 DEPARTMENTS OF THE AU COMMISSION COORDINATING OUR EFFORTS TO TAKE FORWARD THE ABOVE MENTIONED CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES WITH THE GREATER GOAL OF ACTUALIZING THE AU VISION OF AN INTEGRATED, PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL AFRICA.

LOOKING TO 2063, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE AGENDA FOR ENSURING WATER SECURITY, CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT AND SDGS IS PART OF THE OVERALL AU AGENDA FOR 2063. OUR PLANNED APPROACH, AS THE DEPARTMENT FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE, TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2063 AGENDA ON WATER SECURITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT IS CENTERED ON THE FOLLOWING FOUR KEY INTER-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS:

- A **TRANSFORMED AGRICULTURAL SECTOR** THAT WILL HAVE ACHIEVED THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL OF PRODUCTIVITY, THAT WILL NOT ONLY BE ABLE TO PRODUCE ENOUGH FOOD FOR AFRICANS (BOTH RURAL AND URBAN) BUT ALSO TO PRODUCE SURPLUS AND ENGAGE IN A REWARDING TRADE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD. THIS SHOULD BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE AGRICULTURAL AND SPECIFICALLY FOOD PRODUCTION FACILITATED BY WATER, IS WHERE AFRICA SHOULD ENJOY OPTIMUM COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE GIVEN THE HUGE POTENTIAL THAT IS HITHERTO UNTAPPED SUCH AS 60% OF THE WORLD'S UNCULTIVATED ARABLE LAND, THE RAPIDLY RISING POPULATION AND THE PROSPECTS FOR INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE LET ALONE GLOBAL TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL AND ESPECIALLY FOOD PRODUCTS.

- A VIBRANT RURAL ECONOMY THAT WILL HAVE PROVIDED TANGIBLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO ENGAGE IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS – FROM WHICH NOT ONLY THEY CAN DIRECTLY BENEFIT AS A RESULT OF SUCH AN ENGAGEMENT, BUT ALSO FOR THEM TO BE ABLE TO SEE THEIR FUTURE IN RURAL AREAS IN A POSITIVE SENSE VIS-À-VIS URBAN AREAS GIVEN THE INCREASING URBANIZATION THAT CREATES MARKETS AND STIMULATES AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND CONTRIBUTES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING OF AFRICAN CITIZENS.
- A PRODUCTIVE AND A VIBRANT RURAL ECONOMY THAT WILL TOGETHER HAVE FACILITATED OVERALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE STRONG FORWARD AND BACKWARD LINKAGES WITH THE NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTORS (INDUSTRY, TRADE, SERVICES, ETC.) – INCLUDING FOOD AND RAW MATERIALS, FOREIGN EXCHANGE, MARKETS, BUT ALSO LABORS. THE AU FOCUS ON VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT WILL LEAD US THERE.
- A VIBRANT POLITY THAT WILL HAVE CREATED AND CONTINUALLY NURTURED THE CONDUCIVE POLITICAL SPACES AND POLICY SUPPORT NECESSARY NOT ONLY FOR ACHIEVING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED THREE POINTS BUT ALSO FOR AN ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF AFRICAN POPULATION IN PRODUCTIVE AND OTHER MATTERS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS.

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- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

THE ABOVE-MENTIONED ISSUES, IN TURN, HAVE DIRECT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE TARGETS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) CAN BE ACHIEVED.

I WISH YOU SUCCESSFUL DELIBERATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN UNION.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.