



Key Note Address

of

Dr. Janet Edeme,

Head, Rural Economy Division, Dept. of Rural
Economy and Agriculture,

AU Commission,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

At

The Launch of the Comprehensive Programme on
integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa.

16 – 18 September, 2014.

Nairobi, Kenya.

Mg. Mary Mathenge, Director, Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development, Egerton University Kenya

Ms. Lilian Kirimi, Research Coordinator, Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development;

Dr. Johnson Irungu, Director of Crop Management, representing the State Department of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the Republic of Kenya

Mr. Walter de Boef, Senior Programme Officer, at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,

Mr Gerbrand Haverkamp, representative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, The Netherlands,

Dr. Marja Thijssen, Wageningen UR,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you warm greetings from H.E. Tumusiime, Rhoda Peace, the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture and Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel, the Director of the Department at this official launch of the Comprehensive Programme on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all recognize that seed is one of the most crucial elements in the livelihoods of agricultural communities. It is the repository of knowledge passed from generation to generation, and the result of continual adaptation and innovation in the face of ever-greater challenges for survival. The potential benefits from the use of good quality seed by farmers can be enormous, and the availability to farmers of quality seed of a wide-range of

varieties and crops can increase productivity, reduce risks from pest, drought and disease pressure, and increase incomes.

Production increases through the use of adapted varieties in a given area can create employment opportunities related to processing, marketing, and other activities generated through quality seed production. Food security is also heavily dependent on the seed security of the farming community and Seed sector development is essential to foster agricultural growth.

In spite of all these obvious benefits to be attained through a well developed seed sector, Africa has not been able to take full advantage of the advances in seed sector development, mainly because of weak seed production and distribution systems, inadequate supply of quality seed, lack of access to improved germplasm, weak entrepreneurial capacity of small- and medium-size seed enterprises and inadequate implementation of seed policies, international agreements and conventions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In an effort to address these obstacles and barriers within the seed sector, The 5th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU), on the 5th of July 2005, in discussing the importance of improved seeds for increasing agricultural productivity and food security in the continent, recognized that African Governments cannot individually confront challenges represented by developments in the international seed industries and by legal and technical issues which restrict access to genetic resources and biodiversity. The Assembly further stressed Africa's potential for creating its own seed producing industry and requested its commission to consider all aspects in developing a comprehensive, integrated programme and framework for the revitalization of the African

seed sector in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Ladies and Gentlemen, just like the ASBP stresses an integrated systems approach to addressing the challenges in the African seed sector, the Integrated Seed Sector Development Programme also seeks to promote continental and national strategies for addressing the challenges facing the seed sector in a holistic manner while recognizing variations that may exist at national levels.

During the previous 2 phases of the Integrated Seed Sector Programme which took place from 2009 — 2011 and 2011 to 2013, the programme had contributed to the implementation of Component 3 of the AU-Seed and Biotechnology Programme which is the promotion of effective seed production systems including the production of joint communiques and publications on the ISSD. The second communique from the jointly organized workshop on the role of entrepreneurship and priority themes for joint action which took place in Kumasi, Ghana from the 10th to the 13th of April 2013 clearly identified a number of areas for joint action within the AU-ASBP such as the elaboration of seed related Initiatives and Programmes within country agricultural and food security investment plans which have been developed along the CAADP principles and objectives.

In order to ensure alignment of seed related initiatives with the AU Continental Framework and Programme on Seed Sector Development, an expert consultative workshop was organized in July 2013 in Wageningen, The Netherlands and one of the

key Thematic Working Groups that was established was the CAADP/ASBP Seed Sector Development Working Group. Over the past two days, this working group has proposed various mechanisms and processes to ensure a common alignment, coordination and avoidance of duplication in the activities of the various seed related initiatives and programmes on the Continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are all aware of the importance ensuring efficient and coordinated efforts in addressing the challenges of Seed Sector Development in Africa. We are all aware that there have been various projects, programmes and initiatives in time past which made limited impact in addressing the seed sector development challenges on the continent. It is in this regard, that the AU Commission would like to request that as this Pilot Phase of the ISSD is launched, significant effort is made to ensure that the four thematic working groups identified in this 1st phase of the programme show clear linkages and comparative advantages to other existing initiatives particularly at national levels and should at the end of the two year period come up with success stories that can be replicated or upscaled in other African Union Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in an effort to ensure coordination and effective reporting to the AU Summit at the Continental level of all seed related initiatives being implemented on the continent, the AU Commission signed an MOU with the Former Africa Seed Network giving it the continental mandate to facilitate the implementation of the ASBP, and coordinate the reporting of all Seed Sector related initiatives on the continent.

On the 14th of August this year in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, during the Governing Board Meeting of the Former ASN, the Board decided that the ASN be renamed as AfricaSeeds being

cognisant of the additional responsibility and mandate conferred on it by the AU Commission.

In this regard, on behalf of the AU Commission, I would like to use this opportunity to inform our partners and other stakeholders involved in Seed Sector Development programmes in Africa to ensure that AfricaSeeds is informed and to the extent possible included in the implementation of their seed related programmes and projects. In addition, I would like to call upon key partners who have been strongly supportive of Seed Development on the continent such as AGRA and the BMGF to provide much needed and urgent support to AfricaSeeds to enable it effectively implement its role and responsibilities as the continental institution recognized by the AU Commission to coordinate and report on seed related initiatives on the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are aware, the 23rd AU Summit of Heads of State and Government which met recently in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea adopted the *"Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods"* with 7 Key Commitments focusing on

- (i) Recommitment to the Principles and Values of the CAADP Process at Regional and National Levels
- (ii) Commitment to Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture
- (iii) Commitment to Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025 (and within this commitment they resolved to create and enhance the necessary appropriate policy and institutional conditions and support systems to

facilitate amongst others sustainable and reliable production and access to quality and affordable inputs key of which is improved seeds.

- (iv) Commitment to halving Poverty by the year 2025 through inclusive Agricultural Growth and Transformation
- (v) Commitment to Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services
- (vi) Commitment to Enhancing Resilience of Livelihoods and Production Systems to Climate Variability and other related risks
- (vii) Commitment to Mutual Accountability to Actions and Results.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is within the context of this 7th Commitment that the Heads of State and Government also adopted *the CAADP Results Framework* for the period 2015 — 2025. The CAADP Results Framework is an integral part of the country CAADP implementation through which initiatives, Projects and Programmes such as the Integrated Seed Sector Development Programme can be monitored at National level in an effort to track performance and results of the programme, provide a sound and evidence-based system to pursue accountability and ensure alignment and harmonization which would enhance coherence in development efforts.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the implementation of the ISSD is seen to contribute to the implementation of the CAADP Results Framework most especially at National level.

From the 18th to the 22nd of August this year, a team from the AUC and NPCA met in Arusha, Tanzania to refine the Results Framework and also develop an implementation strategy and road map for the operationalization of the Malabo Declaration. The draft implementation Strategy and Road Map as requested by the

Summit in Malabo would be presented for adoption during the AU Summit in January 2015.

As I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like us to keep in mind that the small holder farmer in Africa must always be at the centre of all our efforts and I would like to thank the organizers for convening this very important meeting and I thank you all for your kind attention.