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STATEMENT

BY

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at

The Conference on Land Policy in Africa

Abidjan, Cote D' Ivoire

Monday 25th November, 2019

Excellency, Prime Minister of Cote D' Ivoire

Excellency Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President, African Development Bank

Excellences Representatives of various Governments and International Partner Organisations here present;

All Protocol Observed.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I bring you warm greetings from H.E. Mousa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of African Union Commission. It is my honour and pleasure to deliver this statement at the opening of the Conference on Land Policy in Africa. I salute the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Government of Côte D'Ivoire and all partners for hosting and successfully organizing the 2019 Conference on Land Policy in Africa.

Land in Africa is an important factor of production as most livelihoods and developmental activities are undertaken on land. With this in mind, we need to ensure that the way in which land is distributed and used plays an essential role in promoting sustainable development and achieving peace and stability on the continent. Therefore, good land governance is essential for Africa's development.

This year's conference theme is '***Winning the fight against Corruption in the Land Sector: Sustainable Pathways for Africa's transformation***'. Corruption in the land sector can inhibit the ability for people to access and own land which in turn can marginalize some sectors of society thereby undermining their livelihoods and perpetuating conflicts, hunger and poverty.

For us to win the fight against corruption we need to ensure that land is equitably distributed and accessed by all, more especially women, youths and other vulnerable groups. With regards to women's rights to land, let me emphasize that women continue to contribute significantly towards agricultural production in Africa but in some circumstances are not able to enjoy their rights to land. It is therefore a reality that women and men still do not enjoy the same rights over land.

This year's theme therefore places emphasis on the need for African governments to ensure that policies, processes and institutions by which land, property and natural resources are managed are transparent, accountable, effective, efficient, responsive to the demands of our nations and accessible to all men and women.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is important that land governance also responds to new challenges that our countries are facing such as climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradation and continuous demand for land for different land uses. These challenges in the recent past have spurred other challenges. A good example has been the continuous search for land by some pastoral communities who are only able to find adequate pasture on farming lands which tends to be a source of conflict. In the recent past we have witnessed the loss of lives due to conflicts between herders and farmers in some parts of Africa. Besides that, the continent has witnessed natural disasters that have led to some communities moving from their lands. We therefore have to think of land governance more broadly and understand that the actions we make today related to land, may impact our future.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am proud to share with you that we are making steady progress towards achieving the AU agenda on land as can be confirmed by some of the very progressive decisions made by the third Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, held from the 21st to the 25th of October, 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Notable decisions made at this session among others include:

- The adoption of Guidelines on Prevention and Addressing Land-based Conflicts in Africa;
- The adoption of the Monitoring and Evaluation of Land Governance in Africa (MELA) as the Framework to track and report progress on commitments related to land by AU member states;

- The request for Member States to harmonize legal frameworks in favour of women's land and property rights with a focus on gender-responsive inheritance laws. Member States were further called upon to collect both sex-disaggregated data and specific data on women's land tenure security to better understand variables affecting women's land tenure security.

The above illustrates the AU's commitment to securing land rights and improving land governance in Africa. This Conference on Land Policy in Africa provides an opportunity for us to find as well as share lessons and experiences on how various innovations and tools in the land sector can improve land governance and contribute to addressing many of the developmental challenges faced on our continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, let me emphasize that for us to achieve sustainable land governance and win in the fight against corruption we need to:

- Develop and implement sound land policies that are integrated into other country level policy frameworks;
- Ensure that land governance processes are transparent, affordable, gender responsive and benefit all, particularly vulnerable members of society;
- Secure the land rights of all citizenry and investments on land;
- Ensure good land use practices which safeguards the environment and natural resources; and,
- Ensure that our citizens have sufficient access to information on land and participate in decision making on how land resources will be administered and managed.

In our efforts to end corruption, let us work together to address inequalities and gender differences that exist in accessing land and overall land holding as a sure way of increasing productivity of land, guaranteeing that our citizens have adequate and affordable housing, promoting sustainable resource management and achieving other developmental objectives. That said, thank you very much for leaving your busy work schedules to take part in this event. **I wish you fruitful deliberations.**

Thank you, Shukran, Aksantie Sana, Merci, Obrigada