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**Welcome Remarks by**

**H.E. Mr. Erastus Mwencha,**

**Deputy Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union**

**At the**

First Climate Change and Development for Africa (CCDA-1) Conference on the theme:

**Development First: Addressing Climate Change in Africa**

17 October 2011

UN Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Mr. Chairman
- Your Excellency, Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- Your Excellency Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of UNECA
- The Representative of African Development Bank
- Your Excellency, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance of Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Honorable Ministers present
- Excellencies, Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Excellencies Commissioners and other dignitaries
- Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, NEPAD CEO
- Distinguished participants
- Ladies and Gentlemen: All protocol observed

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you all, on behalf of the African Union Commission, and indeed on behalf of the Joint AUC-AfDB-UNECA Consortium, to participate in the First Climate Change and Development for Africa Conference under a theme of **Development First, Addressing Climate Change in Africa** – a conference that is organized as one of the activities of the joint AUC-UNECA-AfDB ClimDEV Africa Initiative.

Please allow me to express my utmost appreciation to the various high level dignitaries and indeed to all participants who have joined us in this Conference, despite their tight schedule. Let me also thank our host Mr

Abdoulie Janneh and his team for making available the excellent facilities of the UN Conference Centre to hold this conference.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

There is increasing concern over scientific conclusions regarding social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change in Africa, particularly as Africa has contributed the least to the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and is the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and has the least capacity to adapt.

Africa is currently facing numerous severe negative impacts arising from the adverse effects of climate change that have been documented and supported by scientific findings, including those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other reports. Recently we have been witnessing droughts, floods, and storms that have been exacting a significant toll on lives and livelihoods in various parts of Africa.

These extreme climate events are projected to most likely continue with increasing frequencies and severity in impacts. For example, all of Africa is very likely to warm during this century, a warming that is very likely to be larger than the global, annual mean warming throughout the continent and in all seasons. There is no doubt that such impacts are hampering Africa's efforts to attain its development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The theme of this conference, which is centered on Development First, is therefore quite befitting to Africa's concerns for addressing Climate Change challenges in its quest for embarking on accelerated, equitable and sustainable development trajectories and avenues.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

This conference is being held only a month or so before the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP17) and the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP7), that is going to be hosted in Africa (by the Republic of South Africa in Durban). The focus of world attention will once again converge on Durban with huge expectations. Durban is expected to build on the positive gains and momentum achieved in Cancun in terms of making advances on some key areas. Clearly, there are a number of issues at stake for us in COP17. Our legitimate concern over the fate of Kyoto Protocol, which is fundamental to addressing Africa's challenges, remains contentious. Our legitimate quest for developed countries to make good the pledges they had already made on climate finance remains largely elusive.

Our negotiators are making strenuous efforts to make sure that these and other key areas are carefully handled for fair, balanced and concrete outcomes. Needless to mention, Africa has set an example to the rest of the world in terms of negotiating on a common position with united and single voice; the result of which has been encouraging. We have noticed

that Africa is being taken seriously when it speaks with one voice, which also helped us to productively engage strategic partnerships. This is an experiment and experience that Africa is choosing to advance even in other fora, such as on Rio+20, on Bio-Diversity, etc.

You will recall that the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government during its 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held in February this year requested the Commission of the African Union to liaise with the Republic of South Africa, the AfDB and other partners on having an African Pavilion at COP17, and make the necessary preparations to support African Group of Negotiators.

Pursuant to this and other relevant Decisions, the Commission has been working with AfDB, UNECA, South Africa and other partners to organize the African Pavilion that will provide the overall umbrella within which a number of thematic issues are organized. I believe that together we can make the African Pavilion at COP17 in Durban a grand and memorable event in which Africa can showcase how not only it has been grappling with the impacts of climate change but also raise the profile of climate change and development issues in terms of positive and constructive engagement for capturing opportunities for green development. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to join us in this important endeavor and significant event.

The Commission of the African Union has also been working, pursuant to the AU Assembly Decision, towards elaborating an African Strategy on Climate Change. The draft strategy document which has been a subject of series of consultations and review at various levels, is built on four inter-

related themes, including (i) climate change governance, (ii) mainstreaming climate change in development, (iii) harnessing education, science, research and innovation for climate change, and (iv) promoting regional and international cooperation and partnerships in climate. It is encouraging to see through such an exercise that we are building coherence and harmony among our various initiatives, including the ClimDEV Africa programme.

The topics that guide deliberations in this conference, including climate science, information and service delivery; climate resilience development and adaptation; low carbon development; and climate finance, I believe are extremely relevant, and would shed further light for a better understanding and addressing of the issues at hand.

We at the Commission of the African Union, and indeed, the AUC-AfDB-UNECA Consortium look forward to the outcomes and recommendations of this conference. I can assure you that we will continue to work with our Member States, RECs, all stakeholders and Africa's partners in promoting the interests of Africa, which is making African development a reality to improve the lives and livelihoods of our people – in the face of climate change and other challenges.

I thank you