



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

CLOSING REMARKS

BY

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CONFERENCE ON LAND POLICY IN AFRICA

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Excellences, Members of the Diplomatic Community;

Heads and representatives of the International Organizations;

Distinguished delegates and other participants;

Members of the Press Corps;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. I was not personally present here, but I understand from my colleagues that the Second Conference on Land Policy in Africa started this Tuesday on a very high note and, for good reasons, with high hopes and expectations.

2. Based on the outcomes, I have noted with contentment that the expectations have been met. In all, I am made understand that there were about 490 participants from 50 different countries. Participants included traditional authorities, academia and research institutions, government officials, civil society, private sector, local communities, development partners and the diplomatic community.

3. ECA is proud to have successfully hosted this event. I am informed that the Conference witnessed the presentation of 96 scientific papers, 20 round table/policy dialogues, 11 side-events and three Master classes. In addition to very stimulating Plenary Sessions this Conference has generated deep policy dialogues, and recommendations, knowledge, learning and information-sharing, discussions and facilitated networking that will stay with all of you long after you leave this place.

4. Furthermore, the Conference has indeed lived up to its theme: *‘The Africa we want: achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth’*. Most of the papers and discussions have really focused on the youth, recognizing them as the pivot around which social and economic development of African countries should revolve.

5. Undoubtedly, the youth --- who are the majority of the population in every African country --- represents the future of our continent. Our continent will continue to drag behind other continents, if the tremendous potential of the youth are not harnessed in and mainstreamed in our decision-making processes and development programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. As the Conference draws to a close, the challenge that arises is how to make productive use of the outcomes to improve land governance in our countries; deal with the challenges confronting us; effectively utilize the evidence that has been provided for us through the various research findings; as well as implement the policy recommendations that have been made.

7. It should therefore be the legitimate expectation of all of us --- especially the youth --- that this will not be just one of the usual Conferences where after the event we all retire to our destinations and continue business as usual. Rather, we are going back armed with the knowledge and evidence which we must act on to make a difference and improve upon our land governance systems.

8. As I mentioned, in particular the youth of this continent have high hopes that the numerous challenges they face in accessing economic opportunities will be met by policy makers. There is therefore the urgency to deal with challenges of land governance and turn them into opportunities. We can propel economic growth in Africa when the majority of the youth are gainfully employed.

9. The GDP of many countries will go up when the appropriate opportunities are provided. The entire value chain in agriculture offers the biggest opportunity for doing this. Without adequate access to land and secured tenure, this dream will be a mirage. The challenges are there, but so too are the opportunities and the benefits which outweigh the challenges. Together we can go far.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Again, we have been capacitated in every way to improve upon our land governance. It is now our responsibility to use the knowledge we have gained.

11. In closing, I would like to thank all the delegates and participants, especially our traditional leaders who I understand have actively participated in the Conference, the researchers and presenters, the chairs and rapporteurs of various sessions, and the organizers for an excellent and a job well done.

12. I also thank the development partners who have supported us since the beginning of the land policy initiative up till now. It is the expectation that we will continue to work together to further strengthen our partnerships. I also want to thank all the ECA colleagues who supported the organization of this Conference.

13. I wish you all safe journey back and thank you for your attention.