



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

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## **Conference on Land Policy in Africa**

**Opening remarks**

**by**

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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**H.E. Dr. Eyassu Abraha, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources,  
FDRE**

**Dr. Janet Edeme Edeme, African Union Commission (AUC)**

**Mr. Gabriel Negatu, Director, East African Region, AFDB**

**Mr. Matthias Schauer, Deputy Ambassador, Germany**

**Ms. Rachel Mwikali Mueni, Representing the Youth**

**Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors and Heads of mission**

**Distinguished Participants**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is indeed an honor and a great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the UNECA to the Conference on Land Policy which has been organized by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa under the coordination of the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC). Let me express my gratitude to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, for the generosity and hospitality accorded to the organizers and participants of this Conference.

The theme of the Conference, *“The Africa We Want: Achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth”* is very appropriate at this time. It addresses an important concern related to the realization of the African Union Agenda 2063. There is no doubt that land is central to livelihoods and sustainable development. It forms the basis for agriculture, forestry, mining, industry, tourism and urban development. But to maximize on the benefits of land and its resources, inclusion of land users in decision making on how land is governed and managed is crucial. Equitable access and utilization of land and its resources is vital for sustainable economic growth, increased agricultural productivity and the development of a robust agribusiness on the continent.

This Conference is taking place at a time when the continent is experiencing an economic and social reawakening notwithstanding the effects of climate change. Africa is in a hopeful state not only because of its youthfulness but also due to the widespread discovery of land based resources. The 420 million young people aged between 15-35 years can be gainfully involved in the exploitation of these resources especially through agriculture, manufacturing and industrial sectors. Their creativity and ability to seize opportunities provided by technology can be turned to advantage through rigorous design of income generating programs based on land.

### **Distinguished Participants**

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Africa is home to abundant natural resources accounting for at least 30% of the world's natural resource wealth. Currently 12% of oil reserves in the world, 40% of global gold reserves and 60% of uncultivated lands are in Africa. The continent has 70% of coltan deposits, from which electronic microchips are made. If these resources are put to good use they can secure livelihoods, reduce land related conflicts and transform lives.

After a sharp drop in economic growth to 1.6 per cent, Africa is rebounding in 2017 with growth rate of 3.1 per cent due to slight increase in commodity prices and strong growth in domestic demand. Fourteen African countries had an impressive performance of growing by 5 per cent and above. All African countries, except eight economies, registered growth rate of 3 per cent and above. Oil importing countries led the continent's growth among economic groupings, reflecting the move towards more diversification and increased public investment especially in infrastructure. Improved macroeconomic management through fiscal consolidation and prudent monetary policies also guided government expenditures and maintained economic stability in most countries.

Medium term prospects for the continent remain positive. However, this positive growth outlook will depend on the ability to mitigate several internal and external risks and uncertainties. Slow growth recovery in the advanced and emerging economies and tightening financial markets, high fiscal deficits and weather-related shocks remain a threat to the continent's medium-term growth prospects. In order to maintain and enhance the current growth prospects African countries need to focus on medium and long-term strategies to attract private investment, and build infrastructure to boost productivity and competitiveness of their economies.

This gives us reason to be optimistic especially if Africa seizes the opportunity to invest in its land, through strategies and interventions that focus on the bulk of the continent's population: the youth. Industrialization provides a viable solution to the diversification of our economies and expanding employment opportunities for the youth. At the centre of the industrialization agenda should be the conscious involvement of the continent's researchers, professionals and communities so that development strategies are driven by evidence and knowledge.

## **Distinguished Participants**

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The AU Declaration on land issues and challenges emphasizes knowledge generation, dissemination and learning as key to improving land governance. When researchers, policy makers and land professionals converge to share experiences, they are able to come up with viable policy and programmatic solutions to the challenges of land governance. The decision to adopt a scientific approach at the Conference is appropriate because it provides participants with the opportunity to link research findings and policy making process within the land sector. At the ECA we recognize the value of evidence based policy formulation and implementation processes.

We have an opportunity to propel the continent forward through strategic reforms in land governance policies. The African Land Policy Centre has developed a number of tools that can be used in this regard. The promotion and protection of land and the property rights of marginalized communities, including women, youth and pastoralists, is particularly important. Equally, sustainable land use planning and management, documentation and digitization of records, developing the capacity of land professionals to cater for current and emerging societal needs and utilization of technology for improved agricultural production are a few of the measures that ought to be undertaken.

Africa ought to see land as a major resource to enhance food security, peace and security and ensure environmental protection. By developing inclusive land policies, we create an opportunity for investment while simultaneously protecting the interests of the African people. Also globalization patterns provide an opportunity as well as a challenge for the continent. With national and global investors developing growing interest on land and its resources, we must ensure that investment activities are aligned to the needs of the African people. Luckily, the Guidelines on Large scale land based investments in Africa (LSLBI) provide an opportunity for the continent to promote investments in a responsible and sustainable manner.

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion, let me assure you that ECA is committed to contributing to the implementation of the AU Agenda on land as demonstrated by our support through the hosting of the land policy initiative (LPI) for eleven years and now hosting of the African Land Policy Centre. We commit to provide support to AU Agenda on land including hosting the ALPC and continuing to support this land policy conference.

Let me end by welcoming all of you to take advantage of this important platform to form long lasting networks and partnerships in support of Africa's economic and social transformation.

I thank you for your kind attention.