

**Statement Delivered at the Experts Segment of Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals 31 October - November 2013, Addis Ababa Ethiopia**

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*Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Greetings from Her Excellency Commissioner Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture.

Greetings from Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel, Director, DREA.

I am reading this statement on behalf of the Director, Dr. Abebe

I am pleased to be here this morning to address you on this important occasion of the Experts Segment of the Conference on SDGs.

As you know, many countries around the world, including key national, regional, and international institutions, have been reflecting on what developmental programme, global in scale, would follow-up, once the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) reach the end of their time-scale in 2015.

When the MDGs were promulgated at the turn of the century, there was much fanfare and enthusiasm, particularly because the biggest challenge, poverty, was given strategic prominence in the calculations of policymakers around the world. The 8 goals in their totality spanned the range of critical imperatives agreed upon. The spirits infused in the issues were contained in the Millennium Declaration. At the time, H.E. Kofi Annan not only brought the world to re-focus on the challenges facing humanity, but also kindled in the hearts of many people, especially leaders, the imperative to seize the development bull by the horns.

*Distinguished Delegates, ladies and Gentlemen,*

As was realized at that time, the world had to agree on a minimum goal that comprehensively captured the fundamental dimensions of normal existence in a diverse, rapidly changing, and complex global order.

While interests and aspirations were wide-ranging, the identification of a critical minimum of targets was indisputably important.

At mid-term, analysts and national authorities took stock of the rate of performance in realizing MDGs. The answers were not particularly satisfactory. Countries were urged to re-double their efforts to meeting the MDGs by 2015, and from the look of things, some progress has been registered on many fronts, though much remains to be desired.

It is against this background that the world is preparing the ground for a new developmental phase to build upon the MDGs, but by an all-encompassing set of goals that are SMART. The RIO+20 Conference last year was a crucial turning point in this regard. The idea of establishing a framework of Sustainable Development goals, the SDGs, therefore loomed into reference.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The question that has arisen is whether the SDGs would represent a continuation of trends blazed by MDGs, or whether our horizons of thought would be defined by the experiences occasioned by the narrative of limitations and challenges encountered during the period of MDGs implementation.

For relevance, the formulation of SDGs cannot be seen in isolation because the MDGs' phase provides us with a rich base of critical experience from which to draw.

Indeed, there is agreement across the board that the SDGs should embody the kernels of thought embedded in the MDGs in view of the fact that their existence is irreplaceable. Otherwise, we will be throwing the baby with the bathwater.

As for Africa, once the SDGs are devised their domestication in the continent at the national and regional, levels would entail a re-orientation to the abiding values of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Pan Africanism extols the virtues of self-reliance as critical imperatives of unity. Africa cannot embrace an SDGs framework that binds it to a global regime of anachronism and inertia, or the business-as-usual model. The unity and solidarity expressed by the concept of Pan Africanism calls for the re-energisation of efforts against social, political and environmental injustices. The grave phenomenon of

climate change would no doubt feature in the balancing scales of the proposed SDGs.

But the richness of the SDGs, as conceived in the preparatory consultative goals would lack potency if, from an Africa's stand point, they fail to speak to the rhythm of the African Renaissance. The SDGs must contain vital seeds with a potential to catalyze the process of Africa's renewal in all its diversity.

And the world should devote huge resources as a conscious effort to drive the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDG phase between 2016 and 2030, and give it the necessary momentum so crucial for the evolutionary success.

Yet, when all is said and done, the SDGs should have a strong conceptual foundation underpinned by innovation. For innovations will be needed in education, health, energy, food, environmental sustainability, poverty eradication, among others. And this means that the embedding of the MDGs spirit in the framework of SDGs would have to reflect commitment to spearheading technological innovation.

***Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

As our three institutions the AUC, UNECA and AfDB work closely, together with other UN agencies such as UNEP, the Regional Office for Africa, UNFPA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNIDO, and so on, we at the African Union Commission dedicate ourselves, in partnership with all institutions and the RECs, to engage meaningfully in this consultative process and beyond.

It is our firm belief that the formulation of the SDGs, as we work hard to get them processed in consultative engagements such as this one, would embody the developmental spirit that seeks to lift Africa to major heights of prosperous rejuvenation.

***Honourable Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I thank you for your kind attention.