



COMESA CAADP REGIONAL VALIDATION AND
RWANDA ROUNDTABLE MEETING

STATEMENT BY MR. SINDISO NGWENYA,
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SERENA HOTEL, KIGALI, RWANDA

MARCH 29, 2007

Honourable Anastase Murekezi, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Rwanda and Guest of Honour,

Your Excellency, Dr. Charles Murigande, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Rwanda,

Prof. Masnasseh Nshuti, Minister of Labour and Public Services of the Republic of Rwanda,

Mrs. Rosebud Kurwijira, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy at the African Union,

Honourable Members of the Senate and Parliament of the Republic of Rwanda,

Senior Government Officials from the COMESA Region,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Senior Government Officials of the Government of Rwanda,

Representatives of Governments and Cooperating Partners affiliated to COMESA,

Prof. Richard Mkandawire, Representative of the NEPAD Secretariat,

All our Cooperating Partners here present,

National CAADP Focal Points in the COMESA Region,

Leaders of the Private Sector,

Leaders of Civil Society,

Heads of Research and Academic Institutions present,

Colleagues from the COMESA Secretariat,

Representatives of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express our deepest thanks and gratitude to his Excellency, the President of the Republic of Rwanda, President Paul Kagame, the Government and People of Rwanda for hosting this meeting, which is for three days from the 29th-31st March, 2007.

We are indeed all deeply indebted to his Excellency President Paul Kagame, the Government and People of Rwanda for the warm reception and welcome that has been extended to everyone here since we arrived in this beautiful city.

Your Excellency, Guest of Honour,

Honourable Members of the Senate and Parliament,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and members of Development Cooperatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 31st October, 2000, COMESA reached the great milestone of a Free Trade Area (FTA), when nine of the 19 COMESA member States eliminated their tariffs on COMESA originating products. Today 13 member States are participating in the Free Trade Area.

Intra-regional trade in COMESA is growing at an average of 9% per year. In FTA COMESA countries intra-regional trade growth is 20% per year. Agricultural goods comprise about 40% of regional trade by value. If we raise the productivity of the agricultural sector, the share of agricultural trade will go up and we would be making a more meaningful impact on the challenge of poverty and hunger in the region.

The key priorities for COMESA in consolidating the FTA and preparing for the Customs Union include implementing major programs in infrastructure, trade and agriculture. In the agricultural sector, our focus is on implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), a programme of the African Union whose implementation mandate in our region rests with COMESA.

As we are all aware, the CAADP programme's four broad areas of focus include:

- (a) expansion of the irrigation sub-sector and promoting sustainable land management (Pillar 1 of CAADP)
- (b) strengthening trade capacity, improving physical market infrastructure and market support areas such as market information, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity, strengthening regional and cross-border farmer and business

organizations, establishing value addition enterprises and promoting contract farming (Pillar 2 of CAADP)

- (c) promoting food and nutrition security and dealing with the challenges of the vulnerable and food insecure populations (Pillar 3 of CAADP), and
- (d) Strengthening research institutions and supporting farmer adoption of productivity –enhancing technologies (Pillar 4 of CAADP).

Your Excellencies, it is opportune that this meeting is taking place one week after the meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Agriculture, which took place in Khartoum, Sudan, from March 22-23, 2007. In that meeting, our Ministers directed that the implementation of the CAADP be fast tracked and focus on developing appropriate and bankable project proposals in the key areas of crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry development. The key activity areas that the Ministers committed themselves to taking action included urgently included the issue of availability of agricultural inputs, expanding irrigation, addressing infrastructural challenges that hinder agricultural marketing, animal disease control as well as fisheries and aquaculture development. The Ministers further agreed to explore emerging opportunities such as trade in carbon and bio-fuels, while ensuring that regional food security is not compromised.

I am happy to note that Rwanda is again taking the lead according to an article that appeared in the Rwandese daily New Times of Wednesday, 28th March, 2007 in promoting projects on Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM). Hence, the request for submission of competitive reduction proposals. The projects that could benefit from carbon credits include, the Lake Kivu methane as exploration project, biogas and tree planting.

Other areas on which action will be taken immediately include mainstreaming of the COMESA Food and Agricultural Market Information System (FAMIS) into all national agricultural activities, promoting agro-processing and valued addition and spearheading modern technologies.

All delegates at this meeting will receive the full declaration of the COMESA Ministers of Agriculture. It is important to note the emphasis placed in that declaration on mainstreaming gender in agricultural programs.

A further important directive from the Ministers which is relevant to this meeting is the emphasis put by the Ministers on the need to forge strong partnerships with relevant regional and international organizations, as well as cooperating partners in the implementation of agricultural programmes and projects. Indeed, we are here

today because we believe it is crucial for us to update our partners on what we are doing, so they may effectively work with us in the areas we have selected as priorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, given a population increasing at more than 3% per year in the region, rapid agricultural sector growth will be required to meet poverty reduction targets we have set for ourselves in the Millenium Development Goals.

Over the next three days, we are going to share what we in COMESA have done to design and implement programmes in line with the CAADP agenda both at the regional and national level. Also, we will share with the partners present here the early action projects we have identified for immediate implementation so that no ground is lost in revitalizing agriculture in the region.

During this meeting, representatives of governments appointed by their respective Ministers of Agriculture in COMESA member States as National CAADP Focal Points will share the specific situations in their countries relevant to making progress under CAADP. It will be crucial that this team of men and women is supported to lead the efforts of working with all key public and private sector stakeholders to ensure delivery of resources to agriculture. As we all know our Heads of State agreed to set aside 10% of the public budget for agricultural development annually.

This matter is a cornerstone of the CAADP agenda and the COMESA Secretariat will follow it closely.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we now know that in many cases, the Governments budget share of 10% to the agricultural sector will not be adequate to bring the sector target growth rate of 6% per year under CAADP. Yet in other cases, even when 6% agricultural sector growth rate is reached, it will not be enough to reduce poverty. It is because of these challenges that we need to forge strong and dedicated partnerships to exploit all areas where there is potential. Accordingly, we in COMESA consider CAADP as a partnership. We see it as partnership in which our cooperating partners must play a crucial and critical role in assisting member States, first in identifying the gaps and, secondly providing the required sectoral investments. Further, the private sector must be encouraged to play a greater role in the sector and we should all work to address the constraints that hold them back from investing in the region's abundant potential. Civil society, research institutions and other classes of stakeholders should all contribute to the analytical agenda for identifying the real investments that must be made to ensure attainment of sustained growth in the sector.

Over the last year, various meetings have been held which are important to the Pillars of CAADP and for the design of regional and national compact agreements. All these meetings have been key in informing the programs that must be supported

under the various pillars of CAADP. As at March 2007, having carefully considered the challenges of agricultural development in the region, COMESA, with the support of the COMESA CAADP reference group/ eminent persons has identified 13 key regional programmatic areas under which relevant projects would be developed for the advancement of agriculture. Further, some 20 early action projects requiring an investment level of about \$1.5 billion have been identified for implementation. We are most grateful to the partners who have started working with us in these areas.

At the national level, Member States have undertaken significant analytical work to inform the CAADP Agenda. The six phase 1 CAADP countries: Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia are expected to complete rigorous analyses by May 2006 as part of the process of delineating the key growth sectors that will go into the National Compacts. Five of these countries have already initiated the “roundtable process.” We are here in Rwanda to witness the end of the Rwanda process. We strongly salute Rwanda for the leadership it has taken in this regard. In many respects, Rwanda will be a model for CAADP implementation in COMESA. By the time we go to the COMESA Summit in May 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, it is our hope that the other Phase 1 countries will have reached the stage that Rwanda is at in terms of preparing their national compacts. During the course of this meeting, we

shall all learn the key areas that this country intends to target as drivers of agricultural development.

Honourable Ministers,

Honourable Members of the Senate and Parliament,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

CAADP is a process, and not a one time event, and we thus have to continue to be alert all the time to ensure our programmes are aligned to it and contributing to the growth agenda. At this point, let me share with you some of the early start up actions we are putting in place at the regional level as part of the CAADP agenda.

Under Pillar 1, Land and Water Management, to assist member States increase area under irrigation and deliver support to major agricultural projects with a regional impact, we are seeking the establishment of a Regional Irrigation Fund. Our irrigation sector activities are presently receiving technical support from the Government of India as well as the Arab Republic of Egypt, which is a COMESA Member State. We would like to expand this partnership and bring in other partners as irrigation development is a major priority for our region. Beyond irrigation, in the area of Agricultural Inputs, we have prepared a joint COMESA/SADC strategic framework for fertilizer, and this has been expanded through consultations with the

private sector to include issues related to the seed sector. Many aspects of the inputs strategy will be implemented as matter of urgency.

In Pillar 2, we have several projects, in partnership with WWF to promote sustainable agricultural production and raise rural incomes.

Under Pillar 2, the market development pillar, we are consulting with the European Union for speedy implementation of the Regional Food Security and Risk Management Program for Eastern and Southern Africa (REFORM) in which we working with our colleagues in the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community. The COMESA component of this program will focus on strengthening Cross Border Trade Associations. The program will also contribute to improved regional and national capacities to analyze policies and programs for management of chronic food insecurity, and assess the potential of alternative social protection approaches.

Further, within the markets pillar, we are also in process of establishing a regional model manufacturing centre to lead efforts in value addition, particularly in the cotton sector.

Under Pillar 3, the Food Security Pillar, we have launched, with the support of USAID, a Regional Enhanced Livelihoods Program for Communities in Pastoral Areas. The program will include activities to assist with movement and trade of animals across borders; regional Early Warning mechanisms and response to emergencies and conflict; and sanitary and phyto-sanitary harmonization for export across borders and to other countries. A key component of the program is to enhance livestock and livestock products trade within COMESA and with the Middle East through negotiating reasonable animal disease certification, or through alternatives such as export of chilled meat and building on successes already in place.

Still in the livestock sector, we are working with the African Union to implement a programme for the eradication of tsetse fly and trypanosomiasis.

In Pillar 4, which agricultural research and technology, we are, in collaboration with several regional and international partners, taking a value chain approach in this area to promote expansion sub sectors that hold promise for significant rural impact increase. These sectors include the organic sub sector, the leather products sector and the cassava sub sector.

Your Excellencies, all these activities are being compiled together into the COMESA Regional Compact, and during the course of this meeting, we will share with all our partners the Status of the COMESA Regional CAADP Compact design and implementation.

Your Excellencies, the Regional Compact is not complete until all the National Compacts have been designed. This is exactly why we are here to learn the processes used and the areas that this beautiful country has identified in its Compact. It is important that countries clearly define their own priorities based on informed analysis. That is the added value of CAADP. I wish to advise here that the Ministers of Agriculture during their meeting last week singled out the issue of weak agricultural statistics as a major area requiring strengthening in the region. We fully expect the CAADP process to deal with that draw back.

As conclude, I would like to thank the Government of Sweden, the Government of the United Kingdom, the US Government, the EU and the World Bank for the moral and financial support provided to COMESA up to this point in the CAADP process. I would also like to express our deep and sincere gratitude to the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Secretariat, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the FAO and the Global Donor Platform, for their strong

partnership and guidance on many issues of strategic significance to our work in agriculture. We are also grateful to our regional farmer associations and member States for their seriousness in working to resolve the key challenges of our region.

Overall, in COMESA we are determined to raise our cooperation in confronting the many challenges that face us to a new high. We are resolved to marching towards creating a robust Customs Union in which the greatest majority of our people will be supported to participate through tapping of their comparative advantages. We look forward to a Customs Union in which agricultural productivity is spurred by an expanded market and where consumers will have access to quality products produced by a competitive regional private sector.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we look forward to working with you all over the next few days.

I thank you very much.