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## **Statement**

**by**

**H.E Mrs. Rhoda Peace TUMUSIIME**

**Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture  
African Union Commission**

**on the occasion of the opening of the**

**12<sup>th</sup> EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa**

**12 – 16 September, 2016**

**Kigali, Rwanda**

**H.E. Dr. Vincent Biruta, Minister of Natural Resources of the Republic of Rwanda,**

**H.E. Allam-Mi Ahmad, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS),**

**H.E. Hassan-Adoum Bakhit Haggar, Commissioner for the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC),**

**Mr. Alan Ratier, Director-General of the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT),**

**Dr. Joseph Mukabana, Director of African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET) Secretariat and also World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Director for Africa and Least Developed Countries,**

**Mr. Edmund Jackson, Representative of the Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP) Secretariat,**

**Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs),**

**Members of the Press,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Firstly, let me convey the greetings of H.E Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, who would have loved to be here in person, but she is unfortunately not able to join us today due to a previous commitment. Commissioner Tumusiime requested that I also convey the warm greetings of H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission to you all, and extend her sincere gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic Rwanda for hosting this Forum barely two months after successfully hosting the 27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union.

On behalf of H.E Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, I am personally honored to witness this great commitment of the Government of Rwanda, and would also like to express my sincere appreciation.

The 12<sup>th</sup> European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) User Forum for Africa (**the 12th EUMETSAT User Forum for Africa**) is taking place at a time when addressing issues of increased weather and climate variability, and climate change is high on the agenda of the African Union. Meteorological hazards in Africa manifest in various forms including floods, tropical cyclones, storm wave surges, droughts, extremely high temperatures, wild fires, sand or dust storms, landslides and avalanches. The World Bank observes that these hazards have outrageous effects on sectors such as the **productive sector** (agriculture, tourism, commerce and industry), **infrastructure sector** (housing, transportation, power, communication, sanitation and water supply), **social sector** (education, health, governance), and the **cross-cutting sectors** such as environment, livelihoods, religion and culture.

During 2015 and 2016, severe droughts and floods triggered by El Niño weather events have had devastating impacts on food security and the livelihoods of millions of people across the horn of Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. The flooding effects of the El Niño south of the equator contributed to a significant increase in outbreaks of water-borne diseases including cholera and other diarrheal diseases. Cholera outbreaks were recorded in Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia during 2015, while other countries recorded an increase in malaria cases and deaths compared to the same period in 2015. The southern region has experienced water scarcity leading to water rationing, and shortage of power due to impacts on hydropower generation.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished delegates,**

These meteorological hazards remind us of the noble and undisputed role of the African meteorological community to save lives, property and also to contribute to Africa's socio-economic development.

The African political leadership recognizes the important role the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) play. It has swiftly and proactively put in place frameworks, institutions, and programmes in order for the continent to be able to prepare for, respond to, and intervene during times

of meteorological hazards. One such example is the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET) established as a high level mechanism for the development of meteorology and its applications in Africa. Consequently, the African Governments committed to:

1. Strengthening and sustaining National Meteorological Services by providing them with the resources and appropriate institutional frameworks to enable them to execute their functions;
2. Recognize the role of meteorological services as a fundamental component of the national development infrastructure and ensure that meteorological information is a permanent parameter and feature in national current and future plans, programmes and policies;
3. Regard National Meteorological Services as strategic national assets which contribute to national security, transport, food, water, energy and health in addition to being vital to sustainable development; and
4. Ensure that all sub regions of the continent are active and are adequately resourced.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished delegates,**

A second example is the development of the Integrated **African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services)** which was adopted in October 2012 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe and endorsed by the AU Executive Council in 2013. The strategy provides a framework for ensuring increased political support and recognition of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs); and also, offers an environment for enhanced weather and climate service delivery.

I am also happy that the Regional Climate Centre for the Central African Region is now established and operational and with solid political commitment. The African Union Commission is thankful to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), AMCOMET Secretariat for the support and also takes this opportunity to thank ECCAS Member States, CEMAC and ECCAS Secretariat for implementing the Decision of the AU Executive Council in this regard.

With this high-level political support at continental, regional and country levels, I wish to call upon our National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) to ensure that accurate and timely weather and climate information are provided to all stakeholders, including farmers, fishermen, livestock herders, and other vulnerable groups. Thus, aware of the fact that most African economies are agriculture-based, weather and climate constitute a basic input or resource to agricultural planning. To this end, the African Union Commission wishes to inform this gathering that, through the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) project:

- the Commission is committed to ensuring that all participating Member States are equipped with software and infrastructure, particularly, the PUMA Stations in order for our National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to be able to access and process data that is needed for forecasting, prediction, and other related services.
- the Commission has equipped four WMO Regional Training Centres in Africa with equipment and software. Training of African experts in these centres already commenced with the support of the MESA project.
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the AUC and EUMETSAT on the implementation of the MESA project is operating well and Africa continues to access data via the EUMETSAT's EUMETCast System.
- The administrative arrangement with the European Union Joint Research Centre continues to benefit Africans with software, training, as well as expertise the development of environmental and continental environmental and climate bulletins.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished delegates,**

The Commission is grateful to the European Union for the financial support, not only for the infrastructure for meteorological purposes, but also other infrastructure for environmental monitoring activities. The cooperation that exists between the AU and EU in the framework of the Joint Africa – EU Strategy is highly cherished. As some of you might be aware, the Global

Monitoring for Environment and Security (**GMES and Africa**) project, also supported by the EU, will commence implementation at the end of MESA. MESA and GMES Africa are not the only projects that the EU is supporting. We are also grateful for its support to the Climate Change activities including the ClimDev-Africa Initiative, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), the Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEAs) project, and the Building Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction programme, among others.

I wish also to thank the ACP Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities, EUMETSAT, the EU Joint Research Centre, the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD), and all the Regional Implementation Centres for their various roles in the implementation of the MESA project. As we execute our different mandates, I urge that our work be guided by what our political leadership has put in place so that our work remains relevant to the people we serve, and also align our work with Africa's Agenda 2063, which is "**Africa's shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development and a global strategy to optimize the use of Africa's resources for the benefit of all Africans**"

**Honourable Minister, distinguished delegates,**

As I conclude, allow me to once again thank the Government and People of the Republic of Rwanda, EUMETSAT, the local organizers and all those involved in the preparations of this Forum. The effort and resources you put into this organization are highly appreciated. As I wish you all fruitful deliberations, I also wish to assure you that the AUC is committed to executing its mandate and implementing the recommendations of this Forum.

**Thank you!!! Murakoze!!!**