

The African Development Bank Group



Opening Statement by The African Development Bank

at the

Regional Consultative Workshop on Land Policy in North Africa

Presented by

**Mr. Peter Mwanakatwe
(Officer-In-Charge, ADB Ethiopia Office)**

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Director, Food Security and Sustainable Development Division, Dr. Josue Dione;

Representative of the Commissioner, Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Abebe Haile-Gabriel;

Representative of AfDB Country representative in Ethiopia, Mr Eskendir Alemseged;

Representative of the Executive Secretary, Communauté des États Sahélo-sahariens (CENSAD), Mr. Bakary Coulibaly;

Distinguished Representatives of Governments, Civil Society, Private sector, UN organizations, Centers of Excellence, Development Partners,

1. On behalf of the African Development Bank, it is a great honour and privilege to welcome you all to this Regional Consultative Workshop for North Africa on Land Policy. This important event marks the final stage in the series of the regional consultation workshops within – The Land Policy Initiative under the auspices of the AU the ECA and the AfDB. This is a process that started way back in 2006.

2. Allow me first to express deep gratitude to the Government of Ethiopia in whose country this meeting is taking place today. We are grateful for the gracious hospitality. Secondly, to our partners in this joint-initiative, the ECA and the AU for both the premises and excellent organization.

3. What brings us all here today.....

Chairperson, distinguished guests and participants we are here to tackle a subject that is at the heart of all economic activity and a subject that has gained prominence the world at large since the 1990s – Land policy reform. Though the challenges vary considerably across regions and countries, the last decade has seen a tremendous increase in the demand for policy advice on land use. It is within this context that particular attention is being paid on the issue of land in the North Africa region and the expectation is that the following would be achieved in the next three days:

- Identification of key land-related challenges and opportunities for the North Africa Region;
- Identification of the gaps in the knowledge, the institutions and the resources in implementing the current land initiatives in the respective countries and also in the context of North Africa;

4. Why does it Matter.....

As we all know, land, labour, and capital are the three essential factors that underpin all socio-economic production. Land is an essential aspect of wealth generation; in job creation, production of goods and services, and indeed all effort for the reduction of poverty in our continent is linked to the availability of Land. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, including the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and numerous other aspects of our development are interwoven with the use of land.

In the Africa region in particular, two main reasons underlie our gathering today. First, the increasing stakeholder awareness on the need to complement the broader macroeconomic policies with attention to structural issues such as land to ensure the realization of greater economic opportunities. Structural policies affect the way in which the benefits of other policy interventions are realized. Secondly, policymakers now better understand the shortcomings of past approaches to land policy. There is recognition and acceptance that poorly designed land policies and regulations hamper economic growth and development.

5. What Challenges are we trying to address.....

Chairperson - The challenges from inadequate and inappropriate land policies and legislation have resulted in poor and unresponsive systems of land administration which have in turn been associated with high costs. These costs in turn are responsible for the current situation of poverty in many of our African countries. All these are manifested in unequal land distribution, insecure access to land which leads to increased vulnerability especially for the poor, low investment on land, low productivity especially in agriculture which is the mainstay of most of the African countries, low urban development and unsustainable management of natural resources. One grave consequence is chronic food insecurity and the low rate of development in Africa.

6. To address these concerns this Joint initiative and today's consultation process seeks to address amongst others the following.....

- Unproductive cultural practices and poor governance characterized by a continuation of centralized systems with lack of transparency and low consultation;
- Disproportionate allocation of land that has affected peace, security and equitable economic development in parts of our continent;
- Discrimination of certain segments of society including women and inadequate representation in systems of land governance and Low levels of policy dialogue with the wider population

7. The ultimate.....

Chairperson, the joint initiative provides countries with an opportunity to introduce change. Change to adapt the legal frameworks to current conditions and requirements. It provides opportunity for future comprehensive, consistent, harmonious and fully consultative processes in the design and implementation of new laws which is seriously lagging in our continent.

8. Conclusion.....

Ladies and Gentlemen, as noted by many, development is fundamentally a process of change and strengthening poor people's land rights and easing barriers to land transactions can give way to many other social and economic benefits and most importantly; improved governance systems, greater empowerment of women and other marginalized groups, increased private

and public sector investment, higher levels of economic growth, poverty reduction and indeed the overall development of our continent.

With these few remarks I wish you fruitful deliberations throughout your stay here and I hope at the end of it you are able to come out with a product that is truly useful, and reflective of the aspirations of the North Africa people and valuable as an input in the continental framework.