



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Closing Remarks

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Theme: *Feed Africa: Towards Agro-Allied Industrialization for Inclusive Growth*

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**Excellencies
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
Colleagues**

I recall on Monday morning having the pleasure to listen to the rousing remarks of his Excellency, Yemi Osinbanjo, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which left me with a great impression of the scope of the task before us. The task of discussing how we, as Africans, can accelerate the development of an inclusive agro-allied industrialization to not only feed ourselves and improve food security in the region; but also to leverage our abundant land and human resources to promote the agricultural sector as a catalyst to

industrialization. He also offered some encouragement, citing solid examples of efforts and initiatives already being undertaken by African countries.

I must also applaud the passion with which Akinwunmi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, advocated for unlocking the potential of agro-industrial development across Africa and to double regional efforts to reverse the current trends of importing food by investing in the agro-industry, using technology to improve the efficiency of inputs and introducing “Staple Crop Processing Zones” and “Agro-industrial zones” to tackle infrastructural issues faced by farmers.

For almost a decade the ECA has been advocating for commodity based industrialization which has strong complementarities with this year’s AEC theme. The ECA has been promoting structural transformation aimed at promoting accelerated, sustained and inclusive growth and development as articulated in Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and other agreed development agenda. Pursuing economic decentralization and thus rural development, as advocated in the Economic Report on Africa 2016, is imperative to agro-allied industrialization as is improving gender equality and women’s participation in the agricultural revolution.

There are concrete actions points that have been reiterated throughout the course of this conference and these cannot be forgotten. These include: increase investment in agriculture, as clearly articulated in the 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security; a strong public-private sector partnership that increases small farm holders’ productivity and enhances their contribution to national and regional value chains; promotion of regional integration; and focusing on agro-allied industrialization that is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

I have summarised these opening remarks to bring to the forefront the expectations that were laid before us at the start of this conference. Over the last two days we have heard presentations across a myriad of topics on agro-allied industrialization; ranging from the strengths of drought index insurance, irrigation techniques, bioenergy crop adoption, the exploration of gender differentials, youth inequality and climate change perspectives. We have had the privilege of hearing from Africa specific experts in a series of Special events, covering the launch of the African Human Development Report, discussions on the Continental Free Trade Agreement, and showcasing the Youth Agri-preneurship’s Aspirations and Challenges. I have no doubt that

we at the UN, the AfDB, policymakers and researchers in attendance and beyond will seize on the ideas and deliberations that have been uncovered during this Conference and as we return to our various destinations, it will not mark the end of the task we have at hand. That is to continue to push forward, to ensure that we can kick-start an agricultural revolution and ensure no African is left unfed.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Colleagues

Thank you and I wish you a safe journey home.