



Statement delivered by Dr. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda

CEO for FANRPAN

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141 Cresswell Road,

Weavind Park 0184

Private Bag X813

Silverton 0127

Pretoria, South Africa

Tel: +27 12 845 9100

Fax: +27 12 845 9110

Email: policy@fanrpan.org

www.fanrpan.org

Ladies and gentlemen, I stand here on behalf of civil society. I am happy to make this statement after the single most important stakeholder in CAADP, the farmer. There can be no CAADP without farmers. Therefore, as civil society, we believe it's farmers first. Our duty is to work in partnership with them to protect natural resources and use them in a sustainable manner; prioritize research so we can equip them with information for improving productivity, protecting harvests and improving markets. African farmers should have a conducive policy environment that guarantees them a secure livelihood and an ability to feed people.

African ministers and CSOs should partner for better policies

I want to put it on record that I observe and respect all dignitaries here present. **To our Honourable Ministers and Commissioner of the African Union, it is you that I would like to engage in the few minutes that I have. I have a question for you: Who advises you?** Where do you get policy advice? Surely you are in the limelight with a massive responsibility to feed Africa. This is not an easy job that you can do alone. We, as civil society, stand ready to partner with Government to provide the evidence and policy options to inform political decisions.

After decades of stagnation in agricultural yield and little investment in rural economies, African countries are beginning to prioritize the development of agricultural production and markets. Rural development and agricultural productivity improvement now feature prominently on the agenda of national governments and regional economic communities. Continent-wide plans and investments, through programs under the Common Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Research into Use and ACTESA and many others are encouraging. International donors and African governments also recognize the need to invest in agricultural development, as evidenced by the commitment of African countries to achieve the targeted 10% budget allocation to the agriculture sector.

Clearly, policymakers at all levels of government are seeking smart, comprehensive, evidence-based policy solutions to address long-standing problems. To date, there is no reliable source that we as civil society know where our African ministers get policy advice. We as Civil Society

Organizations believe that multi stakeholder policy networks are an efficient tool for meeting this need. Networks have a broader perspective and can invest in addressing national and trans-boundary issues. They facilitate exchange of information and best practices, thus preventing duplication of effort and reducing the learning curve for the field as a whole. Network resources can also be aligned for monitoring and effectiveness, CAADP peer reviews and other joint or coordinated action to effect systemic or region-wide changes. For these and other reasons, policy networks have a special utility and value for the implementation of CAADP.

The success of CAADP at the national and regional level will depend on our policy processes being all-inclusive, people-centred and able to use evidence generated from our African Research institutions. Africa needs multi-stakeholder, multi-national policy networks that support the development and implementation of better food, agriculture and national resources (FANR) policies. Policy network members should include universities, research institutions (both national, regional and international), the business sector, farmer groups, donors, and other civil society organizations such as the media that have a stake in FANR policies. In addition to CSOs, government has to participate with these policy networks so as to remove suspicion, build trust and work together towards a common goal. Policy networks should be known and respected for providing high-quality policy analyses and for convening national policy dialogues that bring together a diverse group of stakeholders. **This combination of relevant, unbiased analysis and broad-based stakeholder dialogue enables the production of viable and effective FANR policy recommendations.**

Support for Multi stakeholder Policy Networks

Unlike what we have witnessed in developed countries, African professional networks are not self propelling, passion driven movements. They need to be created, supported with both human and financial resources. This is because the culture of working across disciplines is yet to be fully embraced and hence, professionals have remained in their comfort zones being able to talk amongst themselves, to themselves and not with other stakeholders. To accomplish real policy change, there is need for strengthening networks and building members' capacity for influencing policy more comprehensively—i.e. from identification of national priorities through broad-based dialogue to

stakeholder advocacy for preferred policies. African governments need to invest in strengthening Africa's research institutions. A 2007 global survey of think tanks by the Foreign Policy Research Institute in America revealed that of the 5080 think tanks in the world, only 274 (5.39%) are in Africa. **There is therefore an urgent need to improve the supply and demand side of policy-relevant research.** In addition to strengthening research institutions, there is need to develop the Regional Economic Communities' and governments' capacity to integrate research findings and stakeholder perspectives into the development of viable policy options. For this to happen, there has to be interactions between research, knowledge use and policy development. Governments have a pivotal role as connectors of multiple stakeholders providing a conducive environment for all actors. Africa already has Sub Regional Organizations under the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) mandated to do research, these are NASRO – North Africa; CORAF – West Africa; ASARECA – East Africa and the soon to be constituted CARDESA – Southern Africa. What Africa now requires are strong policy multi stakeholder networks that will link the research to ordinary citizens.

Policy Dialogues

In Africa, engagement in policy processes is the preserve of the government, international research organizations, donors and the few educated elite. Africa has an oral culture and yet we do not talk enough at local levels. The dialogue is happening at the international level, where a few speak for the majority and not with the majority.

Women farmers make up 70% of African smallholder farmers yet they are often forgotten in policy processes. There is now common agreement that, unlike Asia, Africa's green revolution will be achieved through improved productivity by smallholder farmers. Africa therefore, needs to build policy dialogue platforms that will use simple, people friendly tools such as community theatre, radio, song and dance that will provide for open and transparent two-way exchanges to capture the voices of the smallholder farmers. This will cultivate space for all stakeholders to actively participate in policy formulation and implementation. With such tools in use, the CAADP agenda will be in the hands of ordinary citizens in Africa.

In the CAADP framework, the CAADP Round Table Sessions are designed to be a consensus building tool that advocates for a participatory and

consultative approach for implementation. These sessions present a platform where all stakeholders in the agriculture arena come together and are able to rightfully claim ownership of the process through their direct involvement in policy shaping. We have an obligation to ensure that these Round Tables are broadly inclusive, are not once off events, and are indeed a forum for civil society in partnership with government and donors to jointly develop implementable development plans.

Similar to the bi-annual partnership platform at regional level that we are celebrating here today, we need to set up and institute in each and every African country, a quarterly CAADP Partnership Platform with a similar composition, where government, donors, private sector, farmers, researchers and media dialogue and exchange experiences.

Key Recommendations

The time is right to bring about much-needed policy reform to address the stubborn and widespread problems that have crippled African agriculture and rural economies. Implementation of programmes under CAADP is critical for achieving the global priorities expressed in the Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for CAADP to succeed there are **three imperatives:**

- 1) **Firstly, the CAADP agenda must be people-centred and must be in the hands of ordinary African citizens.** They are the ones who have a majority stake in the business of food production and sustainable development. Let us invest in tools and processes that put the smallholder farmer first and bring their voice and concerns to the fore.

There is an urgent need to compliment the government CAADP focal person with a platform that will bring into the CAADP agenda, a coordinated voice from non-state actors. CAADP needs to designate a host institution in each country that will serve as a node for multi-stakeholder policy dialogues. This will strengthen CAADP advocacy, broaden awareness of CAADP, mobilize all stakeholders to engage in country development processes, serve as platform for coordinating and integrating inputs across the CAADP Pillars and provide a database of key institutions and individuals with expertise. The CAADP country

node could also serve as a platform for CAADP peer reviews and the monitoring of aid effectiveness.

- 2) **Secondly, there is need for a comprehensive CAADP approach to ensure continuity in the policy cycle.** Formulating and implementing smart policies requires a range of skills and capacities, including research capacity to generate relevant data and technologies; analytical skills to convert research findings into policy options; dialogue to debate these options; and advocacy skills to push for adoption of preferred policies. These tasks cannot be performed by several consultants or individual institutions. The region needs to utilise national institutions such as research organizations, universities, local NGOs and individual experts. The region needs longer term projects that can build on credible data, monitor the implementation and impact of policies, and push for changes and improvements as needed. Data needs to be collected on a longitudinal basis and stored in databases that are owned by independent African institutions. We continue to plan on wrong data yet we all acknowledge that Africa's infrastructure for data collection is broken. **My recommendation is for CAADP programmes to work through national universities and strengthen their role in policy processes. This will ensure local ownership and continuity in the policy cycle.**
- 3) **Thirdly, there is need for maximizing the potential of policy networks and partnerships:** Africa's experience with policy networks has shown that such organizations have a special utility and role in the current policy environment. Networks reduce overlap and duplication by facilitating the exchange of information. They are also able to leverage the skills and capacities of individual institutions through partnerships and capacity enhancement initiatives. Policy networks offer the prospect of achieving ambitious goals through joint action on national, trans-boundary or shared problems.