

SPEECH BY FANRPAN CHAIRMAN, MR. SINDISO NGWENYA, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SEED SECURITY PROJECT, PRETORIA, 25 FEBRUARY 2010.

SALUTATIONS

- THE SWISS DEPUTY AMBASSADOR, H.E. ERIC AMHOF
- THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION REPRESENTATIVES
- REPRESENTATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, I RECOGNISE CECILIA KHUPE FROM USAID
- INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORKS, RESAKSS
- I RECOGNISE THE REPRESENTATIVE OF CROP LIFE INTERNATIONAL HERE PRESENT
- THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 13 FARNPAN MEMBER STATES
- THE FANRPAN CEO, DR. LINDIWE MAJELE SIBANDA AND THE FANRPAN SECRETARIAT

BEFORE I READ MY TEXT, LET ME SAY I LEARNT THE FOLLOWING TODAY; I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WHEN IT COMES TO EFFICIENCY AND PRECISION, THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES ARE KNOWN FOR THAT, THE SWISS AND THE GERMANS. AS YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE A SWISS WATCH IT NEVER GOES WRONG. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE DAYS WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THEY HAVE A SWISS WATCH THEY FIND THAT THE WATCH HAS BEEN CLONED BUT LOOKS LIKE A GENUINE SWISS WATCH BUT WITHIN 48 HOURS IT GIVES YOU THE WRONG TIME. SO DO NOT BLAME THE SWISS, BLAME YOURSELF FOR NOT BUYING THE RIGHT PRODUCT FROM THE RIGHT SOURCE. THE GERMANS ARE IN THAT CATERGORY OF PRECISION BUT I DID NOT THINK AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE FANRPAN BOARD THAT FANRPAN IS IN THAT LEAGUE. I AM PROUD THIS MORNING TO RECOGNISE THAT.

ON BEHALF OF MY COLLEAGUES ON THE FANRPAN BOARD I WARMLY WELCOME YOU TO THIS EVERY IMPORTANT OCCASION, THE LAUNCH OF THE REGIONAL SEED SECURITY PROJECT.

SEEDS ARE A DECIDING FACTOR BETWEEN A POOR HARVEST AND A GOOD HARVEST. WITHOUT SEED WE CANNOT START TALKING ABOUT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, LET ALONE FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. SEED SECURITY IS FOOD SECURITY.

AFRICA HAS THE POTENTIAL TO FEED ITS PEOPLE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE IF EFFECTIVE POLICIES ARE IMPLEMENTED AND ADEQUATE INVESTMENTS ARE MADE IN AGRICULTURE. TODAY, WE HAVE TAKEN A GREAT LEAP FOR FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA. WE ARE PLANTING A SEED TO GROW FANRPAN PROGRAMMES AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO SUPPORT AFRICA'S GREEN REVOLUTION, BEING CHAMPIONED IN AFRICA BY AGRA, THE ALLIANCE FOR THE GREEN REVOLUTION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS SON OF AFRICA KOFFI ANNAN, FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS. SOME OF YOU WOULD KNOW WHAT AGRA HAS DONE IN ITS SHORT LIFE AND HOW IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO GET PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, PARTICULARLY UTILISING MONIES AVAILABLE BY THE BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION AND THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION, A MODEST AMOUNT OF US\$15 MILLION WHICH PROVIDES GUARANTEES TO SMALL SCALE FARMERS.

THE SEED PROJECT HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY A GENEROUS GRANT US\$4, 1 MILLION (SWISS CH 4,385,413). I AM MOST IMPRESSED BY THE SWISS' COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT. WE HAVE IT ON RECORD THAT THE FIRST PHASE OF THIS VERY PROJECT, SADC SEED SECURITY NETWORK PHASE ONE, WAS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SADC SECRETARIAT WITH FUNDING FROM THE SDC. OUR MINISTERS HAVE ACCORDINGLY FORMALLY THANKED SDC THROUGH THE SADC COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED ON 5 FEBRUARY 2010 FOLLOWING THE SIGNING OF AN MOU BY THE SADC MINISTERS FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN THE RESEARCH WORK TO INFORM THE HARMONISATION OF SEED POLICIES HAS BEEN A TEDIOUS 14-YEAR JOURNEY.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE MY COLLEAGUE, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC, DR. TOMAZ AUGUSTO SALOMAO AND MY SISTER, MRS. MARGARET NYIRENDA, FOR THEIR STAYING POWER AND DETERMINATION IN MAKING THIS HAPPEN. IN LINE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF SUBSIDIARITY, FANRPAN THROUGH ITS COUNTRY-BASED NODE INSTITUTIONS WHICH BRING TOGETHER FARMERS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, GOVERNMENT AND RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS IS NOW WELL PLACED TO DOMESTICATE THIS REGIONAL PROTOCOL. I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT AS FANRPAN TAKES UP THIS CHALLENGE, WE WILL SOON SEE POSITIVE OUTPUTS IN THE FORM OF ORDINARY FARMERS ENGAGING IN THE BUSINESS OF SEED PRODUCTION. I MUST CONFESS THAT I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT SEED PRODUCTION BELONGS TO THE CHOSEN FEW. FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THE BIBLE, IT SAYS, MANY ARE CALLED BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN BECAUSE MANY OF US FALL BY THE WAYSIDE. BUT I CAN TELL YOU THAT WITH THIS PARTNERSHIP WE SHALL GET THERE. WE EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A PROLIFERATION OF AGRO DEALERS WHO WILL ALLOW QUALITY SEEDS TO BE SEEN SIDE BY SIDE WITH COLA COLA IN RURAL SHOPS. THE REASON YOU HAVE COCA COLA EVERYWHERE IS THAT THEY MUST REACH EVERYONE OUT THERE OR IF IT IS UNILEVER IN INDIA, THEY ARE ABLE TO DISTRIBUTE UNILEVER PRODUCTS TO THE REMOTE AREAS AND ARE ABLE TO PACKAGE THEM INTO SMALL PACKS.

OUR ECONOMIES ARE AGRO-BASED THEREFORE INPUTS SHOULD BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE NOT ONLY IN THE FOUR PROJECT PILOT COUNTRIES NAMELY, MALAWI, SWAZILAND, ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE BUT ALSO AFRICA -WIDE AS THIS HARMONISED PROTOCOL HAS PAVED THE WAY. FOR US AT COMESA AS I TOLD MY COLLEAGUE, DR. TOMAZ SALOMÃO, YOU HAVE THE HARMONISED SEED PROJECT AND AS COMESA AND WE HAVE SAID UNDER OUR TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, WE SHALL SIMPLY GET IT AND MAKE SURE IT IS ADOPTED THROUGHOUT THE REGION BUT THROUGH A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS.

THE FOUR-YEAR SEED PROJECT WILL HELP DOMESTICATE THE SADC HARMONIZED SEED REGULATORY SYSTEM; IMPROVE SEED TRADE AND INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH QUALITY SEED TO FARMERS IN THE REGION. IT WILL ALSO FACILITATE EASIER MOVEMENT OF SEED BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND WILL MAKE MORE VARIETIES OF SEED AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE REGION. IT WILL ALSO INTEGRATE SMALL ISOLATED NATIONAL SEED MARKETS INTO ONE LARGE REGIONAL MARKET.

FOOD INSECURITY REMAINS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS). THE RATIO OF UNDER-NOURISHED CHILDREN TO TOTAL POPULATIONS IN AFRICA IS UP TO 40% IN SOME COUNTRIES. SEED SECURITY IS A MAJOR INGREDIENT TO FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA. THROUGH UNITED ACTION AND RESOLVE, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN REDUCING THE NUMBER OF MORE THAN ONE MILLION PEOPLE IN AFRICA WHO GO TO BED ON AN EMPTY STOMACH EVERY DAY.

THE RECENT GLOBAL CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS THE URGENT NEED FOR AFRICA TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY OF STAPLE FOODS SUCH AS MAIZE, BEANS, CASSAVA, SORGHUM, MILLET AND GROUNDNUTS. WE AT COMESA HAVE SET UP A SPECIALISED AGENCY, THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMODITY TRADE IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (ACTESA) LAUNCHED IN 2008 WHOSE OBJECTIVES ARE:

1. IMPROVE COMPETITIVENESS AND INTEGRATION OF STAPLE FOODS MARKETS IN COMESA MEMBER STATES THROUGH IMPROVED MICRO AND MACROECONOMIC POLICIES AS THE DRIVERS OF STAPLE FOOD MARKETS;
2. IMPROVE AND EXPAND MARKET FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR STAPLE FOODS' COMMERCIALIZATION;
3. INCREASE COMMERCIAL INTEGRATION OF STAPLE FOODS' PRODUCERS INTO NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETS.

THE SADC DAR ES SALAAM DECLARATION AND THE REGIONAL INDICATIVE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RISDP) EMPHASIZE THAT IN ORDER TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY, AFRICA SHOULD URGENTLY IMPROVE ACCESS TO INPUTS SUCH AS FERTILIZER AND SEEDS, PROMOTE RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND INVEST IN APPROPRIATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR IRRIGATION, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION.

AFRICA, UNLIKE ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA HAS NOT BENEFITTED FROM THE GREEN REVOLUTION OF THE 1960S IN TERMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION OF SEED VARIETIES. DESPITE ITS SIZE, AFRICA'S SEED TRADE AMOUNTS TO LESS THAN 2% OF THE GLOBAL SEED TRADE.

THE MAPUTO AND ABUJA DECLARATIONS DEMAND THAT AFRICA INVESTS IN AGRICULTURE FOR FOOD SECURITY. THROUGH THE COMESA, EAC AND SADC TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT WE HOPE THAT BENEFITS FROM THIS PROJECT WILL BE SCALED UP TO REACH THE 526 MILLION CITIZENS. THESE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ARE THE FRUITS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION. WE WELCOME THIS PROJECT WHICH IS BEING IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE PRINCIPLES OF SUBSIDIARITY THROUGH FANRPAN. THIS PROJECT IS AN EXAMPLE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN FURTHERING OUR REGIONAL COMMON AGENDA.

THIS PROJECT IS IN LINE WITH THE AFRICAN-UNION'S NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD) AND THE COMPREHENSIVE AFRICA AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CAADP) PILLARS. THE SEED SECURITY PROJECT WILL BOOST INITIATIVES UNDER THE SOON TO BE FINALISED COMESA CAADP REGIONAL COMPACT THAT FANRPAN IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING FOR SUBMISSION TO THE COMESA MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE IN MAY THIS YEAR.

WE ARE CONVINCED THAT GREATER SEED SECURITY WILL HELP THE TARGETED FARMING COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM HIGH-YIELDING AND

LOCALLY ADAPTED CROP VARIETIES. THIS WILL IN TURN MAXIMISE FOOD PRODUCTION PER UNIT OF LABOUR AND OF OTHER INPUTS.

THIS PROJECT FALLS WITHIN FANRPAN'S AGRICULTURAL INPUT AND OUTPUT MARKETS CLUSTER WHICH IS ALREADY HOUSING THE WARM PROJECT- *WOMEN ACCESSING REALIGNED MARKETS* FUNDED BY THE BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION AND THE INPUT VOUCHER PROJECT FUNDED BY USAID. THE FACT THAT THREE OUT OF FANRPAN'S 10 PROJECTS ARE ON SEEDS IS TESTIMONY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEDS TO FOOD SECURITY. THESE PROJECTS ARE COMPLIMENTED BY THE INITIATIVES WE HAVE TAKEN IN:

(1) CLIMATE PROOFING OUR AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENTS THROUGH INVESTMENTS BY THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION, THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION;

AND (2) REDUCING HOUSEHOLD VULNERABILITY USING THE FANRPAN DEVELOPED HOUSEHOLD VULNERABILITY INDEX, THIS WE DO IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WORLD VISION AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICA TRUST.

I WANT TO THANK ALL OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FOR THE SUPPORT AND WELCOME THE ENGAGEMENTS FROM ADDITIONAL PARTNERS AS I AM CONVINCED THAT THIS REGION CAN FEED ITSELF AND BE THE BREAD BASKET FOR AFRICA AND THE WORLD.

ALLOW ME ONCE AGAIN TO THANK THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FOR THEIR TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN FANRPAN AND I WANT TO ASSURE THEM THAT THIS INVESTMENT WILL BEAR FRUIT AND NOT JUST FOR THE FOUR PILOT COUNTRIES BUT AFRICA-WIDE.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL