



CONCEPT NOTE

Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment

Theme:

Advancing concerted action for improved livelihoods in Africa

Venue: Addis Ababa; Ethiopia

Date: October 5 – 9, 2015

1. BACKGROUND

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the configuration of the Specialised Technical Committees (STCs) and the modalities of their operationalization (Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII) and Decision Assembly/ AU/Dec.365 (XVII) in January 2009 and July 2011, respectively as Organs of the Union in accordance with Article 5 (1) (g) of the Constitutive Act. One of the Specialized Technical Committees recommended for establishment is the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment. The Specialized Technical Committees are composed of Ministers or senior officials responsible for sectors falling within their respective areas of competence. They are responsible for preparing projects and programmes of the Union and submitting them to the Executive Council. They also have the duty to ensure the supervision, follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union and the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union. The STC is also expected to carry out any other functions assigned to it for the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the provisions of relevant AU Acts.

The STCs are expected to meet at least every two years in order to discharge the responsibilities vested upon them by the AU Assembly. Accordingly the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the African Union Commission in partnership with The NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) is organizing the Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment scheduled to be held from 5th – 9th October 2015 at the AUC Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This Concept Note is therefore designed to provide the background, the issues to be discussed, the objectives, expected outcomes as well as structure of the Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

2. RATIONALE

The year 2015 marks a significant milestone in guiding both global and African Sustainable Development for the years to come. The United Nations General assembly is expected to endorse the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. The Twenty First session of United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21), scheduled for December 2015, is expected to reach a legally binding agreement on Climate Change. The Malabo Declaration on Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation (3AGT), with its clearly articulated commitments on eradicating hunger, halving poverty, boosting intra-African trade and enhancing the resilience of production systems and livelihoods to climate change and other shocks, is calling action for impact and sustaining the CAADP Momentum.

Cognizant of the role of the STC in ensuring supervision, follow-up and the evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union and the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the union, and also of need for critical review and then endorsement of strategic documents by AU Policy organs, as well as strengthening and aligning tools and platforms and capacity at all levels, the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission and NEPAD Coordinating and Planning Agency are co-organizing this Inaugural Conference of the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

3. OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is to review relevant strategic goals, facilitate mutual accountability and Identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment related initiatives, and their implications on the achievement of the overarching goals of Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation (3AGT) agenda for attaining food and nutrition security, reduce poverty, boost intra-African trade, and enhance resilience of production systems and livelihoods to Climate Change and related shocks. More specifically, the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment aims to attain the following objectives:

- a. To review and adopt the Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
- b. To facilitate broad-based consultation and dialogue among all relevant stakeholders on mutual accountability, mutual learning and biennial reporting on previous commitments;
- c. Consideration of various strategic documents related to Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
- d. To identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment initiatives and agree on areas of follow up actions at various levels; and
- e. To examine and internalize the strategic and operational modalities for coordination mechanisms between the relevant sector ministries at Member State level, which are also linked to those at REC level.

The STC Conference will therefore provide a peer environment for exchange and learning to support the achievement of individual and collective responsibilities for relevant sector ministries targets.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The envisaged outcomes of the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment are:

- a. The Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment adopted;
- b. Modalities and mechanisms for mutual accountability, mutual learning and biennial reporting agreed;
- c. Various relevant strategic documents reviewed and pertinent decisions adopted;
- d. Agreements on synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development water and environment initiatives identified and areas of follow up actions at various levels obtained.

5. LOCATION, MEETING DATE AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Inaugural Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is scheduled to take place from 5th to 9th October 2015 at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

6. FORMAT AND STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE

The Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment will have Ministerial segment that will be held on 8th and 9th October 2015, which will be preceded by a two day meeting of Senior Officials/Experts that will take place on 5th and 6th October 2015. Various side events and stakeholders' forums will be organized on the margins of the Conference on October 7, 2015 to facilitate consultations and contribute to an interactive Ministerial session that will be held on 8th and 9th October 2015. The 7th of October 2015 will also be used to prepare and adopt the reports of the Senior Officials/Experts to be submitted for consideration by the Ministers.

6.1. Senior Officials/Experts Meeting

There will be plenary and parallel sessions for Experts/Senior Officials to facilitate deliberations and review of documents, these include:

- **Opening Plenary Session**
- **Parallel Session A:** The Agriculture and Rural Development Experts Session to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Parallel Session B:** The Environment, Climate Change, Water and Land Management Experts Session to review and consider relevant documents and reports;
- **Parallel Session C:** Water and Sanitation Session Experts to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Parallel Session D:** The Livestock and Fisheries Experts Session to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Plenary Session of Experts/Senior Officials:** to review and consider reports and issues on the reports of the parallel sessions and the theme of the Conference.

Both the plenary and parallel sessions of experts/senior officials will be conducted on 5th and 6th October 2015.

6.2. The Ministerial Session

The two days Ministerial session will be conducted in a format that on the one hand facilitates inclusive and interactive conversations and dialogue among the ministers as well as between the Ministers and key strategic stakeholders, and on the other hand allows the Ministers to consider strategic reports and items that warrant their considerations in a closed session. Hence, the 1st day of the conference will be devoted to an open interactive session, while the 2nd and final day will be devoted to a closed session.

The Ministerial session is scheduled for the 8th and 9th of October 2015.