



Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (IFNA) 1st Partners Meeting Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 18th -19th 2016

Welcome Remarks by Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO, NEPAD Agency

- **State Minister for Program Section, Federal Ministry of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**
- **H.E. Senior Vice President of JICA**
- **H.E. Dr. Belay Begashaw, Director General of the Sustainable Development Centre for Africa**
- **UN Agency Present**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament**
- **Distinguished Government Representatives**
- **Representatives of international Organisations, the Private**
- **Sector, Civil Society Organisations**
- **All other protocol observed**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I am very delighted that today, we are witnessing the 1st Initiative of Food and Nutrition security in Africa (IFNA) Partners Meeting following its launch in the margins of the TICAD VI in Nairobi in August last year. It is a remarkable “coming to life” of an important initiative which related to the issues central to Africa’s efforts to attain sustainable economic growth and inclusive and dignified livelihoods for all. It is no wonder that this important milestone has to take place here in Addis Ababa, the seat for the African Union Commission.

Through Agenda 2063’s 7 Aspirations and 20 Goals and further précised in the 2014 African Union Summit decision on Agriculture Transformation – the Malabo Decision - Africa is unambiguous and decisive on the need, the urgency and concreteness to address sustainably the issue of hunger and malnutrition. The Goal to “Zero hunger by 2023” is not an emotional outburst, but a demonstration of the resolve, the determination and commitment to, not just stop, but also reverse the trends on hunger and malnutrition.

It is an imperative. It is non-negotiable. Sometime we say it is a priority – BUT remember, we don’t have the luxury to move it up and down the list of what you

call priorities. Before we begin to deal with those priorities, we should have addressed the issue of hunger and malnutrition. It is a condition of our being and key pillar upholding the continent's development success and will impact across all sectors, disciplines and interests – whether Education, a health workforce, a health population or social and political cohesion.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Therefore, what I am saying is that the initiative on IFNA, with the aim to provide a framework for multi-institutional collaboration among African Governments and partners to accelerate IMPLEMENTATION of food security and nutrition policies and programmes, is one that is noble, but is also one that cannot fail. This is why in the NEPAD Agency, we insist on the clarity and concreteness of the initiative's value addition. We do know that the Food security and Nutrition is a busy space with so much going on. IFNA cannot be just another addition, but a demand-led instrument to enhance coherence and leveraging of the various efforts – capacity and resources – towards a common goal to sustainably “zero hunger” and thereby eliminating critical hindrances in the continent's development pathways. I wish to acknowledge IFNA's very clear and sound guiding principles which allude to some key components in the implementation of Agenda 2063. These include (a) focus on results and impact; (b) local – country ownership and that implementation being fully internal in national and local government structures; (d) reaching out across public, private and civil society constituencies and interests

I am also happy that IFNA relates and will complement a lot of work already being done by countries with support from many of the Partners present here – WFP, FAO, AfDB, IFPRI, the SUN Movement and other bilateral and multilateral partners; of course with the visionary leadership of the African Union Commission. At continental level, some of these efforts include the (a) NEPAD Africa Nutrition Scorecard which serves as a useful barometer of the inroads and progress made by individual countries to effectively deal with the problem of undernutrition at regional and national levels; (b) Africa Edition of the Global Hunger Index – meant to measure and track hunger with a special focus, on percentage of undernourished populations, including stunting; (c) Zero Hunger – Conditions for Success – an interesting and unique analysis on the minimum policy and investment decisions we

need to be taking into account to succeed with the “Zero hunger” target
[DOCUMENT AVAILABLE ON THE NEPAD WEBSITE]

There are many efforts, strategies and actions that are working and delivering results. It is my hope that IFNA will bring a spotlight on such experiences to enable us consolidate, expand and scale up. Success implies, we are achieving the CRITICAL MASS. I would also expect that IFNA will also be one such platform to will ALLOW us to interrogate what we are doing, pick up the lessons and innovate new solutions; ALLOW deep introspection of what has worked and why, what has not worked, what could be done differently.

Our environment and circumstances are changing and changing rapidly; the issue are more complex including options too numerous. So, I believe, catalysing IMPLEMENTATION is more than JUST DOING MORE OF THE SAME.

I want to be consoled that within our lifetime, the statistics such as “nearly one in five people living in Africa is hungry and malnutrition; close to 50% of under 5 children in many of our countries being stunted” will be unrecognisable history. I want to be a proud African living in the continent – THE AFRICA WE WANT. Please assure me I am not dreaming. It is in our hands to make this a reality for ourselves and for our children. Ending nutrition insecurity across our Continent is indeed a formidable challenge, but not one that is impossible.

As I indicated earlier, Agenda 2063 and the SDGs are explicit and further specific on the commitment to reduce child stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% by 2025 and in particular focusing on 1000 days as the only window of opportunity to reduce stunting and underweight. Moreover, recognising the importance of food and nutrition security, Agenda 2063 and most importantly goal number 3, which is healthy and well-nourished citizens, IFNA offers a great opportunity and a platform for coordinated action among partners committed to improving food security and nutrition in Africa.

The NEPAD Agency is keen and ready to with JICA and other partners to ensure IFNA is responsive to member states needs and is successful in contributing to realising Africa’s goals and targets on food security and nutrition. Already, an initial cohort of

10 countries¹ are identified and engagement is underway. I do believe this will actively involve and collaborate with all other partner initiatives on nutrition in these countries with enhanced coordination, alignment and harmonisation of both actors and actions. Innovative Partnerships are critical for accelerating progress towards our African goals and targets to end hunger and malnutrition.

Ladies and Gentleman, allow me to reiterate the appreciation of NEPAD Agency to all the partners that are here present. Your participation on this 1st IFNA Partners Meeting denotes commitment to accompany the African Government and populations in seeking transformative solutions on the factor of food security and nutrition.

To JICA, we treasure our partnership with you on IFNA and other various interventions in Africa.

I am also highly grateful to the Ethiopian Government for hosting us here for this key milestone and also for being one of the leading countries demonstrating working solutions in pushing back hunger and malnutrition

Lastly, the member states present here – through IFNA we want to accompany you and lighten the burden to achieve Zero Hunger. This only you can do, we are there to support you.

It is my sincere expectations that you will have open and candid discussions and that you will emerge at the end of tomorrow that it is not just another meeting, but time well spent in contributing to driving Africa's resolve to eliminate hunger and malnutrition

I thank you

¹ Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Sudan,