

- ***Excellencies;***
- ***Honourable Ministers;***
- ***Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of AGRA;***
- ***Distinguished delegates;***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen.***

Good morning!

It is a great honour and privilege to officiate this opening ceremony of the Africa Food Systems Forum, 2023. On behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, I warmly welcome all delegates – both international guests who have travelled all the way to Dar es Salaam and all those who are following the proceedings virtually. A special welcome to all farmers who are Africa’s breadwinners and bearers of regional and global food security as well as food price stability. ***Karibuni Sana!***

### **Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Tanzania is privileged to host this historic Summit for the second time; the first time was from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2012. On that note, I thank the AGRF Secretariat and their partners for availing us another opportunity and for collaborating with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, in making this Summit a reality. The attendance is quite impressive, with an estimated number of over 3,000 from over 70 countries. The content of the Summit looks robust, with the programme lining-up over 350 renowned speakers and practitioners on various topical issues on regional and global food systems.

### **Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Safe and nutritious food is among the most basic and universal rights of all humans for survival and wellbeing. It does not matter how rich or poor we are, whether young or old, male or female. Each one of us equally needs and is divinely entitled to quality food. Nevertheless, with multiple global crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and desertification, the COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going Russia-Ukraine war, the right to food has been denied to about a quarter of Africa's population. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition Report of July 2023, one in five people in Africa is going hungry — that is more than twice the global average. The number of people experiencing hunger is projected to rise by more than 22 million in 2023, with food import bills in the region estimated at USD 75 billion (*AfDB 2023*). Such a looming food deficit, coupled with rising import bills and a wide range of nutritional challenges, undermine regional output growth and our drive towards Agenda 2063: “The Africa we Want”.

This Summit under the theme: **“Recover, Regenerate, Act: Africa’s Solutions to Food Systems Transformation,”** is a veritable test of our individual and collective resolve to go beyond lofty words and translate them into urgent concrete actions, to foster food systems transformation, capitalizing on our vast land resource, demographic dividend and a strong, dynamic force of African women.

## **Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The United Republic of Tanzania appreciates food systems transformation initiatives and is committed to coalitions and partnerships such as the AGRF. Our key objectives include realising SDG-2 - achieving zero hunger come 2030 and scaling up our potential as a regional and global food granary. In that regard, food system transformation has remained a top development agenda, and we have registered several milestones. Here are a few examples:

First, agriculture is recognised as an engine of inclusive growth and mainstay of the economy. It employs about 65 percent of the population, with GDP shares of 27 percent and 21 percent for Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, respectively, growing at about 5 percent annually. The sector contributes about 30 percent of the total export earnings and supplies 65 percent of all industrial raw materials in the country.

Second, the government has scaled up the budget for agriculture by about 70 percent, over the last two years, from USD 120 million in 2021/2022 to USD 397 million in 2023/24 in order to catalyze agriculture and food system transformation. The increased budget is aimed at transforming agriculture into Commercial Agriculture and increase the crop sub-sector growth to 10 percent by 2030 from the current rate of 5.4 percent. The initiative also aims at improving extension services and increasing investment in the sector as well as motivating youth participation in agri-business through establishing block irrigation farming under the **Building a Better Tomorrow: Youth Initiative for Agribusiness** (BBT-YIA). One of the successful cases in this regard is the youth agribusiness incubation centre called Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneur Cooperative (SUGECO). The Livestock Sector Building Better Tomorrow – Live (BBT-Live) is also being established for beef production and aquaculture. Quite impressive results are already being realised. Tanzania is also leveraging digital technologies for planning, monitoring and evaluation, extension services, marketing, payment systems, and business support services.

Third, Tanzania has put in place policies and strategies supportive of food systems. As a result of implementation of fairly robust policies and strategies, Tanzania has had food self-sufficiency ratios of above 100 percent for over two decades. We in Tanzania have also introduced low cost and longterm agriculture financing to the private sector including establishment of a facility at the Central Bank that enables commercial banks to borrow for onward lending to farmers at a single-digit interest rate. Recapitalization of the Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank has also contributed to growth in agriculture financing.

Fourth, cognizance of the challenges emanating from Climate change, Tanzania has embraced climate-smart agriculture, including regenerative production systems (Soil health technologies, use of less on-farm inputs like agrochemicals and fertilizers), while promoting judicious use of off-farm inputs. We have also embarked on using inclusive green growth tools (IGG-Tools), which is a

framework for capacity building and measuring the levels of compliance for small, medium, and large-scale producers as well as processors and agribusinesses. In developing the tools, Tanzania collaborates with local NGOs and international organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Care International, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This is largely championed under the Southern Agricultural Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT).

Fifth, we have also scaled up investment in agriculture research and education. This involves working closely with universities and agricultural research institutions to develop advanced farming techniques, pesticides, high yield seeds, promoting agribusiness, and encouraging the youth to take interest in agriculture. We are also leveraging PPPs especially in construction of irrigation schemes, provision of extension services, training and retooling of extension staff; and promotion of farmer-to-farmer learning.

### **Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite the successes highlighted above, there are still some unresolved challenges especially low production and productivity. Furthermore, like many other countries, Tanzania remains vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change, pest outbreaks and soil degradation. Other challenges include limited access to the right technologies, underfunding of scientific research and limited value addition. Inadequate financing of food value chains is also still a major constraint, mainly due to high cost of borrowing for the agriculture sector. Additionally, women and youth tend to be the most financially excluded segments of the population.

### **Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my firm conviction that such challenges can be resolved with transformative ideas from this Summit. Allow me to lay out four areas for your consideration:

**First**, on the supply side, Africa needs to harness the existing scientific knowledge (including indigenous technology) to produce and process enough food for its people and for the global markets. Therefore, African Governments should take requisite measures to provide small scale farmers with affordable inputs, knowledge, skills and finance to enhance productivity along food value chains. We also need to scale up digitalization and financing of scientific research. We must also appreciate that our youth and women are central to our food systems and need to harness their growing numbers and ensure they benefit from their sweat and innovativeness. In particular, we should endeavour to make agriculture enticing to the younger generation through the use of modern technology, easy access to land, start-up capital and markets targeting activities like horticulture which pay off relatively quickly.

**Second**, there is need to put an end to exploitative practices to farmers by enforcing the use of standard weights and measures as well as banning forward market practices to protect farmers. In Tanzania, we have successfully overcome

such malpractices in a number of value chains such as meat, rice and beans but we still need to extend it to other agro produce.

**Third**, food systems transformation needs a multisectoral development approach, including easing supply chains and movement of food commodities. I therefore, urge African countries to honour the regional trade arrangements, in particular the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), by complying with trade protocols and removing non-tariff barriers (NTBs). The growth of our private sector and its success in the regional and global markets hinge on how supportive our policies are.

**Lastly**, peace and security are important pre-requisites for functioning food systems. Millions of displaced people and refugees in Africa and in the world have had their lives and food production capacities disrupted. These are farmers and livestock keepers who used to be self-reliant but because of wars and conflicts they suffer the indignity of depending on the generosity and good will of others. This must stop, we should embrace peaceful ways of resolving conflicts and ensure peace and security prevail in our continent and other parts of the world.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With these remarks I now have the honour and pleasure to announce that the **Africa Food Systems Forum, 2023 Summit** is officially opened and I am now ready to proceed with launching of the 2023 Africa Agriculture Status Report (AASR).

***Thank You for Your Kind Attention***