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OPENING SPEECH BY DR. GODFREY BAHIGWA

**DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**THE 4TH WORLD ANTIMICROBIAL AWARENESS WEEK CAMPAIGN
FOR AFRICA**

21ST NOVEMBER 2022, DAKAR, SENEGAL

1. H.E. Amb Minata Samaté Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, African Union Commission
2. Hon. Minister for Health and Social Action, Dr Marie Khemesse Ngom Ndiaye
3. Hon. Minister for Livestock and Animal Production, Mr. Aly Saleh Diop
4. Hon Minister for Environment and Sustainable, Development, Mr. Alioune Ndoye
5. Dr. Ahmed Ogowell Ouma, Ag Director, Africa CDC
6. Dr Abebe Haile-Gabriel Assistant Director-General, and Regional Representative for Africa, FAO
7. Mr. AbdulHakim Elwaer Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Near East and North Africa, FAO
8. Dr. Karim Tounkara, Representative, WOAHA Regional Representation for Africa
9. Dr Matshidiso Rebecca MOETI, WHO Regional Director for Africa
10. Mr. Frank Turyatunga, Director and Regional Representative for Africa, UNEP
11. Dr. Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, WHO
12. Distinguished African members of the Global Leaders Group on AMR
13. Representatives of Regional Economic Communities, Member States, technical and development partners
14. Representatives of the Media
15. Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocol observed.

I bring you greetings from H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission. It is a pleasure for me to join you for this year's World Antimicrobial Awareness Week Campaign for Africa, whose theme is "**Preventing Antimicrobial Resistance Together in Africa.**" The African Union Commission is delighted to participate in this year's World Antimicrobial Awareness Week Campaign.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Animal resources are a key contributor to Africa's Agricultural GDP and livelihoods. However, the animal disease burden in Africa is responsible for annual losses of over US\$4 billion in Africa South of the Sahara alone, equivalent to 25 percent of the total value of animal production in the continent. Management of some of the diseases require the use of anti-microbials.

However, the lack of knowledge, inadequate capacities, poor enforcement of regulation, and inadequate engagement of stakeholders have led to irrational use of drugs leading to the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance. The World Bank has stated that unless urgent action is taken, antimicrobial resistance will have far reaching impacts on public health, agricultural systems and socio-economic development.

First, the global increase in healthcare costs may reach more than \$1 trillion per year by 2050 worldwide.

Secondly, by 2050, the decline in global livestock production could range from a low of 2.6 percent to a high of 7.5 percent per year impacting heavily on food security and livelihoods.

Thirdly, an additional 28.3 million people will fall into extreme poverty in 2050 in the high-impact antimicrobial resistance scenario, and the vast majority (26.2 million) would live in low-income countries.

Therefore, we must double our efforts to:

- i) Develop and implement enabling policies and legislations on antimicrobials to minimize and contain AMR,
- ii) Improve surveillance of antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance to inform decision-making,
- iii) Promote prudent antimicrobial use to delay emergence of AMR,
- iv) Advocate for policies and statutes that promote infection prevention and control, biosecurity, and Good Agricultural Practices to limit transmission,
- v) Promote equitable access to affordable, quality-assured essential medicines to mitigate harm.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, as the African Medicines Agency (AMA) comes into effect, I want to appreciate the work of the African Commission and its Member States. There has been a significant step forward in Africa with the ratification of the treaty creating the AMA by seventeen Member States of the African Union. This breakthrough paves the way for improved continental regulatory systems and higher medical and drug product quality standards.

To inform the work of the AUC on control of AMR, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government has adopted the AU Framework on AMR control and the African Position on AMR. An AU Task Force for AMR

control has also been established to work with Member States to prioritize continent-wide efforts to increase political commitment, mobilize resources, and promote policies that improve AMR control.

Ladies and gentlemen, no one nation or institution can address the AMR challenges alone. They require collective and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. I therefore call on all Members States, Regional Economic Communities, Private Sector Actors, Civil Society Organizations, Partners and other stakeholders to prioritize partnerships over unilateralism. We must prioritize the One Health approach in our fight against AMR - preventing antimicrobial resistance is our shared responsibility.

Leveraging on our continental mandate and convening power, AUC will continue to work with Member States, RECs and the African Regional Quadripartite (FAO, WHO, WOAHA and UNEP) to combat and mitigate AMR in Africa. The AUC remains committed to strengthening engagement with all our Partners to entrench good governance, increase advocacy and mobilize resources for AMR control in Africa.

We can still win this battle against antimicrobial resistance. We should not be modest in our actions, we must be ambitious. We need to act now, we need to act swiftly, we need to act strong! We need to act together to prevent and control AMR!

I wish you all a very successful World Antimicrobial Awareness Week Campaign.

I thank you all for your attention.