

## **SPEECH FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASARECA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Your Excellency the Vice President of the republic of Burundi – Dr. Rufyikiri Gervais,  
Other Excellencies present, The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development – Hon. (Mrs) Kayitesi Odette, Honourable Patron Ministers, members of the ASARECA Board of Directors, the Executive Director of ASARECA - Dr. Fina Opio, the Director General of ISABU - Mr. Nahimana Dieudone, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

The ASARECA General Assembly is the non-executive Governance organ of ASARECA that provides oversight to the organization. It was established to offer strategic guidance to ASARECA in order to promote economic growth, fight poverty, eradicate hunger and enhance sustainable use of resources in Eastern and Central Africa. It was established following the approval of ASARECA's new Constitution in 2010; and subsequently the 1<sup>st</sup> ASARECA General Assembly was held on 14-16 December 2011 at the Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda.

The 1st ASARECA General Assembly in 2011 made a number of recommendations for ASARECA and I would like to mention a few:

1. Working with national governments to increase investments in Science, Technology and Innovations (STI), particularly advances in biotechnology, and ICT
2. Strengthening the mechanisms for member countries to tap into existing opportunities (including technological options) to enhance regional agricultural production and productivity
3. Supporting member countries to generate reliable weather data through building the capacity at national and regional levels for dependable weather forecasts to aid decision-making and appropriate responses to climate change
4. Sensitizing member countries to promote best practices that enhance production, food security and adaptation to effects of climate change

5. Strengthening ASARECA engagement with stakeholders in policy advocacy and dialogue to solicit political will and development of supportive policies for agricultural development
6. Lobbying for government support for smallholder farmers to access inputs and credit services to invest in more productive technologies and practices
7. Championing the establishment of a new generation of agricultural Universities that integrate agricultural research and University training
8. Strengthening ASARECA's collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to garner political support for the CAADP process
9. Adopting English and French as official languages to enable the various stakeholders interact and communicate more effectively
10. Supporting farmers and their organizations to build their capacities to engage in post-production activities in the value chains, such as value addition, marketing and enterprise development, and developing entrepreneurial skills such as record keeping, business planning, market intelligence, negotiation skills, and M&E
11. Creating innovative platforms and networks for information and knowledge management, including indigenous knowledge and information sharing, to promote continuous learning among the different stakeholders.
12. Supporting and encouraging NGOs that play supportive and complementary roles in the functions of ASARECA, and creating platforms for their networking and partnerships with research and training institutes
13. Supporting the private sector and their strategic partners
14. Dealing with emerging issues underlying food insecurity in the ASARECA region and the role of agriculture in overall regional economic transformation
15. Mainstreaming universities in the R&D system for example: establishing and coordinating national platforms which bring together various Faculties of Agriculture in the ECA sub-region to foster and develop regional programs on capacity building.

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, we shall be receiving a report on progress in addressing these recommendations, during the Business Committee meeting of this General Assembly on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013

The objectives this 2<sup>nd</sup> ASARECA General Assembly and Scientific Conference are as follows:

1. To provide a forum for the General Assembly members to meet and perform their functions as stipulated in the ASARECA Constitution.
2. To provide lessons learnt and identify success factors for agricultural transformation in the Eastern and Central Africa.
3. To develop and strengthen partnerships in transforming agriculture.
4. To develop and adopt an action plan to influence agricultural transformation as an engine for equitable economic growth in the Eastern and Central Africa.

Your Excellency, ladies and Gentlemen, I am hoping that in the next four days the General Assembly will provide a conducive environment for you to debate what was initiated at the 1<sup>st</sup> ASARECA General Assembly in 2011. This will include identifying issues affecting ASARECA and the development of Agricultural research in Eastern and Central Africa. Your valuable deliberations will go a long way in helping ASARECA achieve the rather ambitious challenge of Transforming agriculture for equitable economic growth in Eastern and Central Africa.

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, I take this opportunity to welcome you to the 2nd ASARECA General Assembly and Scientific Conference and to wish you a pleasant stay in Bujumbura!

Thank you for your attention.