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# ECOSOCC CLUSTER OPERATIONALIZATION

## OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

NAIROBI, KENYA, 6-7 JUNE 2016

## **Operationalization Meeting of the Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster**

**6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016, Nairobi-Kenya**

### **Background**

Per the statutes of Article 11 of the ECOSOCC, the Sectorial Clusters are established as key operational mechanisms of ECOSOCC to formulate opinions and provide inputs into the policies and programs of the African Union. The ECOSOCC Assembly also recognizes the importance of the Sectorial Clusters, as it was underscored as a main priority in its Cairo Decision. The Decision of the ECOSOCC Assembly echoed those of the Executive Council of the Union in EX.CL/Dec. 890 (XXVII), where it encourages ECOSOCC to establish Sectorial Clusters in order to gradually achieve a people centered union.

The Standing Committee, as the executive organ of ECOSOCC, had also reiterated its importance in all ECOSOCC Ordinary and extra ordinary sessions held in 2015. Accordingly, ECOSOCC is convening a meeting to operationalize the AU ECOSOCC Rural Economy and Agriculture (REA) Cluster.

The meeting considered important decisions and recommendations pertaining to the framework of the operationalization and functioning of the cluster. The report is organized in three main sections: Opening, Presentations and Decisions and Recommendations.

### **SESSION 1 – Opening**

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Alain Blaise Batongue, the Chairperson for the REA Cluster, AU ECOSOCC. The Chairperson in his opening remarks welcomed all members of the Cluster to the meeting. He mentioned that the cluster had files and projects ahead; hence the cluster would not run out of work once it commences.

He further stated that REA Cluster Action plans included among others, to establish the cooperation mechanisms between the Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster, and the affiliated structures of the African Union whose tasks are complementary to the Cluster, such as the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the AUC, African Centre for Fertilizer Development (ACFD), and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

The Chairman also mentioned that, the Cluster will be sharing the best practice experiences as far as the REA in Africa is concerned; this will be an important part of the actions. He further iterated that, the Cluster will be drawing its Work plans for the year 2016 and 2017.

In his address, the Ag Head of ECOSOCC Secretariat, Amb Jalel Chelba highlighted the importance of the Cluster and the need to harness the contribution of not only core

members of this clusters but also to attract the expertise within the wider civil society organizations. He stressed on the need for partnership between the Cluster and AUC Department in charge of REA as well as other AU organs whose work is pertinent to the Cluster. He reiterated the primary role of the REA Cluster to support African Union Policies and Programs in the area of Rural Economy and Agriculture.

The Presiding Officer of the AU ECOSOCC, Mr. Joseph Chilengi welcomed the participants and mentioned the need for members of this cluster to have discussions with other partners to harmonize ideas as a group. He advised that members should establish policy mechanisms for the cluster and also to become Strategic interlocutor on the issues pertaining to this cluster. He stated that members should make inputs into the AU policies and provide the necessary feedbacks when the need arises.

## **SESSION TWO – Presentations**

### **a. Presentation on the AU Rural Economy and Agriculture Agenda**

The Second session opened with a presentation from Mr. Jonathan Nyarko Ocran, Policy Officer – Livestock, Department of REA. He shared with the members the background, Mandate, Vision, Mission, Structure, the Programs and activities of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture.

The presentation was followed by discussions on the mandate of the cluster, the need to popularize AU programs and policies on Rural Economy and Agriculture and to defend African common positions.

### **b. Technical Presentation by Cluster Members**

This session was introduced by the Chairperson of the Cluster, Mr. Alain Batongue. He urged members to raise issues that are of concern to the Cluster and also suggest how best the Cluster can intervene in such areas.

The following points were raised by members during the discussions:

- CSO's as members of the Cluster have a significant role to play in the policy domain in Africa
- The Cluster has to consolidate its relationship with AU organs including the identification of opportunities for consultation and collaboration on priority projects and programs such as CAADP.
- The commitment of the AU Member States to CAADP in accordance with the Malabo Declaration.
- Develop a Strategy or Action Plan for popularizing the decisions of AU at the Regional and National levels
- Plans to hold workshops for CSO's for evidence based engagement
- Coordinating with other clusters to sensitize CSOs on the Agenda 2063

- Take a look at the relationship with SDG's and Agenda 2063 with the reference point being the latter
- Establishing a mechanism for information sharing and for communication between the cluster and AU as well as with the general public on emerging issues within the field.

#### **c. 2016 / 2017 Action Plan of the REA Cluster**

The Chairman of the Cluster presented the 2016 / 2017 Action Plan of the ECOSOCC Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster. The core areas of the Rural and Agricultural Cluster are Rural Economy, Agriculture and Food Security, Livestock, the Environment, Water Resources and Natural Resources, Desertification, etc. He talked about the Actions to be carried out, the deliverables, resources necessary, stipulated dates and the venues. See annex for the 2016 / 2017 Action plan.

#### **d. On Structure and Category of Membership**

- Members present decided that the core group of ECOSOCC cannot by itself implement the mandate of the REA Cluster. Furthermore, its legitimacy would emphasize the need for interconnectivity with the wider African civil society community that it represents in the African Union.
- The core component will be expanded to fulfill the wider functions of the Cluster. The core group will be responsible for setting the policy agenda.
- The implementation of Cluster programs should be decentralized in regions and Member States in coordination with national ECOSOCC Chapters.

### **SESSION THREE – Decisions and Resolutions**

The final session deliberated on the Decisions and Resolutions highlighted below:

#### **e. Relationship with DREA / AUC**

- Members need to meet with the DREA to have discussions and provide views on a particular issue, thus building a lasting relationship
- This year's development focuses on CAADP. The activities considered are a sensitization meeting for stakeholders on issues related to the Rural Economy and Agricultural Cluster.
- The 1st Biennale review for the CAADP must be considered as well. This is the first time Member States will report after the Malabo declaration. Members must evaluate the Malabo declaration thus organizing a meeting prior to the summit.
- Plans are underway for COP 22 in Morocco thus members should liaise with the AUC.
- CAADP Partnership Platform meeting (March - April 2017)
- Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Water, Rural Development and Environment ( Oct. – Nov. 2017)

- Africa-Arab Cooperation on Agricultural Development and Food Security (Oct 2016)

#### **f. Relationship with General Assembly members**

- Members who work in the field of the cluster and are not members yet should be brought on board.
- Get details of the National Chapters of the Members States.

#### **g. Relation with the National Chapters**

- Have discussions with Member States that have started operating their National Chapters
- There is a need to have the full participation of the cluster in running of the National Chapters

#### **h. Communication Strategy**

- The activities of the cluster should be featured on the AU/ ECOSOCC websites
- Members must visit the AU / ECOSOCC websites
- Create a mailing group for members
- Group chats should also be encouraged
- Members must patronize the Social media platforms

#### **i. On the 2016 / 2017 Action Plans of the REA**

- Members must support the domestication of the common position on the outcome of COP 21
- Conduct expert meetings to evaluate the implementation of the outcomes of COP 21 at the local level.
- Organize programs on how to enhance and consolidate the working partnership with the Department
- Organize training workshop for journalist on CAADP and other key activities of the cluster.