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Remarks by the United Nations Secretary General Special Envoy at the RUFORUM Independent Dialogue for African Heads of State on 01 July 2021

Excellencies, Heads of State, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests - good afternoon. I thank the Government of the Republic of Malawi and **His Excellency President Lazarus Chakwera**, for hosting this Summit event today. I am here **representing the UN Deputy Secretary General** Amina Mohammed who also serves as the **Chair of the Food Systems Summit Advisory Committee**.

The UN Secretary General launched the Food Systems Summit in 2019 recognising that **we are lagging behind on achieving SDGs**, and that the COVID pandemic threatened to take us backwards. As the **UN Decade of Action** commences, we are only **9 farming seasons away from 2030** and transforming our food systems is one of

the ways in which we can **impact SDGs** and make progress for the sake of **people, planet and our shared prosperity**.

In the ongoing **UN Food Systems Summit Dialogue process**, we have seen diverse constituencies come together to give voice to ideas and approaches that could **provide opportunities for potential pathways** for countries to transform their food systems. To deliver the Summit, we have launched processes that reinforce each other: from the Summit Dialogues, to Action Tracks, to the Scientific Group, to Levers of Change and to our Champions, we see six areas **emerging from the Summit process** including:

1. nourishing people - at the centre of which is ending hunger and malnutrition;
2. reducing impact on climate change and biodiversity;
3. building resilience;
4. improving livelihoods and empowering communities;
5. shifting to sustainable consumption; and
6. leveraging knowledge and innovation.

Excellences, while food defines us, defines our communities, our countries and brings us together, we must **rethink how we are producing, processing and consuming food**. We must **reinvent and revitalise** how we work together in a **systems approach to create multiple wins** - not just for ourselves but for our planet too.

There are various entry points for Africa to transform its food systems and I will just give a few examples:

RUFORUM THOUGHT PIECE ON Pre-UN Food Systems Summit 2021

- Africa has the most **undeveloped arable land, equivalent to 25% of the world's fertile land**;
- Estimates suggest that for **every 10 per cent increase in farm yields, there has been a 7 per cent reduction in poverty in Africa**;
- **Closing the gender gap in Africa will result in up to a 10 percent increase in food production and up to a 13 percent decrease in poverty**;
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, **7 out of 10 are farmers and are responsible for 80% of food production**. Imagine if we could empower them to produce efficiently and sustainably.

With the right **partnership and collective action within the continent**, we can drive both policy and technological innovations that can **benefit our people and our economies and reduce negative effects** on our environment.

As the Pre-Summit takes place later this July, and the Summit in September, we are **encouraged to see African countries coming together, showing leadership, exchanging ideas, sharing knowledge and being bold** as we heard the Minister of Malawi state a minute ago in his remarks. I am optimistic about the emergence of a strong narrative from Africa anchored in our own context.

I wish to commend **NEPAD, UN ECA, RUFORUM, other academia and other partners that have supported Member States** in the Summit process and ensuring that we come through on an African vision.

It is important that Africa sits at the global table and presents her priorities in food system transformation. It is also important that **African countries anchor their national pathways and game changing ideas in scientific evidence**. It is essential that governments and other stakeholders understand where to invest for the highest returns.

In conclusion, I hope that we can use the Food Systems Summit as an opportunity to build back better and stronger.

Thank you once again for inviting me and I wish you **bold and courageous conversations** that can allow us to walk and work together **towards a sustainable 2030 agenda**.

This is our Fifth issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of our RUFORUM Thought Pieces on the Pre-UN Food Systems Summit 2021. This Thought Piece is part of the discussion Issues presented by the author during "African Heads of State Dialogue". You can get more information about RUFORUM at www.ruforum.org. You may also share your thought piece about the UN Food Systems Summit Dialogue with us by writing to e.adipala@ruforum.org and copying e.acan@ruforum.org

About the Author

Dr. Kalibata is the President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). She leads the organization's efforts with public and private partners to ensure a food secure and prosperous Africa through rapid, inclusive, sustainable agricultural growth, improving the productivity and livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers in Africa. Prior to joining AGRA, Dr. Kalibata was Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI).

She holds a doctorate in Entomology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States. She was awarded the Yara Prize, Honorary Doctorate from the University of Liège, and the National Academy of Sciences' Public Welfare Medal.