

## Closing Remarks for the 2010 African Green Revolution Forum - Kofi Annan

Let me start by thanking the government of Ghana for the excellent support and generous hospitality they have accorded to this first-ever African Green Revolution Forum. Let me thank my dear friend, former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo for joining us. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Prime Minister Peter Pinda of the Republic of Tanzania.

My gratitude to the ministers from several countries, as well as the many business leaders, farmers, and civil societies, for joining us for these past three days.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the sponsors that made this unique Forum possible. I am honored that all of you accepted my invitation to this Forum.

When I took on the task of chair of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, I knew we had to get a green revolution on its way. I think we have started doing that.

However, for it to turn into a massive revolution that will impact many countries, and millions of farmers – for that is the only scale that matters – we need a movement behind us. I cannot do this alone.

Therefore, as I stand before you this morning, I am thrilled to see that a genuine movement has emerged. It is a collective, all-inclusive movement. For present here for the past 3 days were farmers. The real foot soldiers. We demonstrated that we are not doing this for them, we are doing this with them.

This week I saw something I have never seen before. The bankers for Africa were in attendance. The CEOs of Africa were in attendance. And they stayed for three days! This is something you never hear of on this continent. Friends said this is the first time they have ever seen such a group of top bankers and CEOs at an agricultural event.

This is excellent news. We are finally getting the message across. Agriculture pays. Agriculture is a business. And we are ready to run it as one, for millions of smallholder farmers.

I saw African scientists this week who are at the forefront of developing Africa's own solutions to unlock agricultural productivity.

I saw our women – from farmers to scientists, policymakers to owners of agri business – rallying behind the movement. This is encouraging, for only they know, better than anyone, that the green revolution is first and foremost about them! Africa's women will lead the charge.

I saw civil society organizations that are critical to the movement step up with renewed commitment.

I was particularly delighted to see the cream of Africa's parliamentarians join us. They carried a unique message. "We represent our constituencies, the majority of whom are farmers." They pledged to step up to the plate and make sure the green revolution happens, to transform their people's lives.

Of course we had African political figures come out in force. The Prime Minister from Tanzania. The Vice President of Ghana. And the indefatigable presence of the former President of Nigeria, His Excellency Obasanjo. These gracious, impassioned leaders threw their political weight behind this shining moment of transformation for Africa.

So you can feel my heart beat, for I know that we have arrived at the tipping point. We have converted words to action. We have launched ourselves on a trajectory toward taking the green revolution to scale.

Let me reflect a little bit on the concrete actions going forward that have come out of this forum.

First: We are agreed to pool our efforts and resources to scale up breadbasket investment plans across many more African countries, consistent with the investment blueprints for the agricultural growth corridors, and the country compacts of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program of the African Union-NEPAD.

Second: We have agreed to empower women throughout the agricultural value chain by accelerating the access to improved technology, finance, markets – and most importantly – strongly engage their participation in the policy formulation processes.

Third: We have agreed to implement the Impact Investment Fund for African Agriculture in order to scale up access to finance by farmers and agri-businesses.

Four: Increase investment in science, technology and research for food and nutrition security. But this has to be done on a sustained basis, and in cooperation with the farmers.

Five: We have agreed to accelerate access to improved seed by promoting the entire value chain, including support for plant breeding, seed companies and seed distribution systems.

Six: We have agreed to improve fertilizer supply systems and encourage more efficient fertilizer value chains, and to scale up agro dealers to improve access by farmers.

For all of the above to work, we also agreed to implement more inclusive business models that link agri-businesses, commercial farms and smallholder farmers. And we also agreed that this agri-business model must be firmly supported by investments in infrastructure, including irrigation, storage and food processing. All of this must ensure that smallholder farmers benefit.

We must exercise better water management – getting the most crop per drop of water and ensuring that our farmers can build an asset base that will improve their resilience.

We must recognize that the backbone of African agriculture is mixed crop livestock systems. Livestock will be integrated into the vitally important breadbasket initiatives and corridor models, to make them even more efficient and sustainable. It is key to food security in Africa.

President Obasanjo reminded us of the need to change the mindset. It is okay to be a farmer!

We all know that we cannot succeed unless governments play their role. We cannot get used to poverty. We will eradicate it. African governments must rise up and seize the moment. As I said in my opening remarks, if leaders don't lead, the people will make them lead! But I am convinced that you, who hold the reins of power, *will* lead at this most crucial time as we realize our dream of achieving a green revolution for Africa.

As we go forward, the euphoria must be tempered by the sobering reality of climate change. We will put in place measures to adapt to this onslaught of nature. The African farmer did not cause climate change. But she must bear the brunt of it.

Let's change our destiny. I call for the global community to honor their commitments for climate change adaptation in support of millions of African smallholder farmers.

Ladies and gentlemen – *partners in hope* – optimism can no longer be deferred. The time for action is now. For as you leave this forum, you are carrying upon your shoulders the vibrant hopes of a generation and a continent. We will not dash the dream of the African farmer.

Yesterday we celebrated the remarkable life and achievements of the architect of the green revolution.

Dr. Normal Borlaug saved more lives than anyone else in history. And yet in his final days, his very last words were, "Take it to the farmer!" Yes – take it to the farmer. It is our mandate that his words live on. And they shall, with Africa's *own* and *unique* green revolution.

When we gathered here three days ago, we walked into this hall as individuals – isolated from one another and unsure of what the path forward might be.

Today we move forward, strongly united and passionately committed to the concrete actions that we have jointly developed.

With our hands on the plow, we will till this beautiful land's soil together, and help Africa reap a bountiful harvest.

This is Africa's moment. Together, as a movement, we will feed Africa. And we will not fail!

Thank you very much.