

# Official opening speech

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Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Mussa Ame Silima  
(MP); Minister of Agriculture, Natural  
Resources, Environment and Cooperatives,  
Zanzibar

Hon. Charles N. Keenja (MP), Minister of  
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Hon. Mohamed Babu; Regional  
Commissioner, Arusha

Dr. N. Oulter; President of ISTRC

Dr. Peter Hartman; Director General,  
International Institute of Tropical  
Agriculture (IITA)

Distinguished Scientists

Dear Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure and privilege to be invited to deliver the Opening Address of the 13th Symposium of the ISTRC. On behalf of the Government and the people of Tanzania, I welcome you all, and in particular our foreign participants to Arusha and Tanzania. May I also use this opportunity to extend my special welcome and thanks to Dr. N. Poulter, President of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops and other members of the Executive Council for honouring our country with the privilege of hosting this very important international scientific meeting. This meeting, I am told, was last held in the African continent in 1991 in Ghana.

The theme of the Symposium:- Tropical Root and Tuber Crops: Opportunities for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Livelihoods in Developing countries – is most appropriate and timely to our own situation. In Tanzania, the potential contribution of tropical root and tuber crops to sustainable livelihoods cannot be over-emphasized. For

example, in the year 2002/03 the total contribution of roots and tubers to total food production in the country was 30 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, agriculture in Tanzania is the most important sector in the national economy. The sector contributes about 50% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 56.2% of export earnings and provides employment for over 80% of the working population. The agricultural sector is also the major source of food for the population and for raw materials for industrial sector. Agricultural development in Tanzania is therefore crucial in achieving the objectives of employment, food security, income generation and poverty reduction on which the government has laid great emphasis. According to the 2002 census Tanzania has a population of 34.4 million inhabitants with an annual growth rate of 2.9 per cent. The country also has abundant land resources with a total area of 94.5 million hectares, out of which 44 million hectares of land is classified as suitable for agriculture. Recent studies however indicate that only 10.1 million hectares of the arable land (23 per cent) is under cultivation. It is also estimated that 50 million hectares is suitable for livestock production while only 50 per cent (i.e. 26 million hectares) is used. Nevertheless, Tanzania ranks third in livestock numbers in Africa with an estimated 18 million head of cattle.

Despite this abundance of the land resource, Tanzania's agriculture is predominantly characterized by small-scale subsistence farming occupying an estimated 85 per cent of the arable land currently in use. Also the land under irrigation is currently limited to an estimated 0.2 million hectares while there are 2.3 million hectares of land with very high development potential for irrigation. The reasons for our failure to utilize this vast natural resource is our low investment capacity in the agricultural sector, prevalence

of insect pests and diseased and inadequate rural infrastructure. The Minister has already alluded to these issues in his remarks.

In recent years the performance of agricultural sector has shown a positive trend as mentioned by the Minister. In the year 2003 the production of food crops in the country was 8.5 million tons, out of which 4.1 million tons were cereals and 4.4 million tons non-cereals. Root and Tuber crops particularly cassava, sweetpotato and irish potatoes contributed 50% of the non-cereals food crops component. In the same year, production of major cash crops (coffee, cotton, cashew, sugar, tea and tobacco) was on average 19.8% higher than the previous year.

Processing of both food and cash crops locally is being emphasized in order to add value of the products, to diversity utilization of the agricultural products at household and industrial levels, and to compete well at local and international markets. In 2003, the private sector was sensitized and it is responding well in establishing and improving local processing plants for cash crops such as cashew nut, tea, coffee and cotton. The government is urging the private sector to invest in the processing of food crops including roots and tubers, fruits, livestock products etc.

Mr. Chairman, our vision is to have an agricultural sector that by the year 2025 is modernized, commercial, highly productive and profitable, and that utilizes natural resources in an overall sustainable manner, and acts as an effective basis for intersectoral linkages. In order to support the Agricultural sector the government has put into place several national policies and strategies which include:

1. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)
2. The Rural Development Strategy (RDS)

3. The Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS)
4. The Tanzania Agriculture and Livestock Development Policy (1997) and
5. The Cooperative Development Policy (2002).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2000/01) has outlined the growth targets for the agricultural sector for the coming five years as follows:-

1. Increase real annual agricultural GDP growth from 3.6% to 6% by year 2005.
2. Increase annual growth rate of export crops from 6.8% to 9% by the year 2005.
3. Increase real annual growth rate of the livestock component from 2.7% to 5% by year 2005.

Mr. Chairman, in August 2001, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania approved the country's Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS) to provide a basis for action by both the public and private sector towards the growth of the agricultural sector. The ASDS, which is one of the major components of the Rural Development Strategy (RDS), stems from the Agricultural and Livestock Policy as well as Cooperative Development Strategy of 1997. All these strategies and policies are in line with the Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) 2025.

Mr. Chairman, may I at this juncture, very briefly talk about the range of reform programmes implemented by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. There are reforms taking place in relation to monetary policies, fiscal policies (public expenditure, taxes, subsidies) and trade policies (liberalization of markets, privatization and divestiture of state enterprises). These

reforms have created a commercially oriented macro-economic environment. Input and output markets have been largely liberalized and private traders and farmer organizations are increasingly providing services to farmers. The private sector is expanding rapidly in response to the favourable economic and policy environment. The liberalization of markets, decontrol of foreign exchange markets, and removal of trade restrictions and monopoly marketing has had profound influences on the agricultural sector. The main thrust of the national policy framework is to transform the Tanzanian economy and make it more commercialized and marketing-oriented. The ASDS and its implementing programme i.e., Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP), place greater emphasis on stakeholder-led agricultural development.

Mr. Chairman, one of the critical issues necessary for the development of the agricultural sector as identified in the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy, is the clarity of the public and private roles in improving support services, including agricultural research, extension and training. The private sector is expected to increase its role in providing a wide range of demand driven support services to smallholder farmers. The public sector, on the other hand, will gradually, but increasingly, limit its role to financing the provision of collective goods and services that the private sector is unwilling or unable to provide, and the targeted financing of goods and services to eventually overcome rural poverty and create rural wealth.

However, the progress so far has been made by the sector in crop marketing that has been largely liberalized and private traders and farmer organizations are increasingly providing services to farmers. The private sector is expanding rapidly in response to the favourable economic and policy environment.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that these policy reforms, together with good governance and enhanced people's participation in decision making will accelerate the growth of the

agricultural sector and contribute significantly to poverty alleviation.

Mr. Chairman, to go back to the theme of this Symposium; in most of our developing countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, root and tuber crops are closely associated with food security and complement the objectives of protecting mankind against malnutrition. They also have potential in providing opportunities of revenue generating activities for most rural dwellers and provide the bulk of the daily caloric intake of majority of our people.

On the other hand, the potential use of root and tuber crops as a source of cheap feed for the development of the livestock industry and as a source of starch for chemical and confectionery industries has to a large extent not been fully explored in these countries. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania having recognized the enormous contribution which roots and tuber crops could make to the attainment of the objective of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), has decided to actively promote efficiency in the production, processing, marketing and utilization of these crops to their full potential.

Mr. Chairman, the theme of the symposium: Tropical Root and Tubers Crops; Opportunities for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Livelihoods in Developing Countries, is a theme that is raising hopes and aspiration's of millions of small scale farmers engaged in the production of root crops many of whom are at subsistence level. I, too, share their hopes that your deliberation this week will provide the solutions/ technologies that will transform the lives of these farmers and improve their well-being.

It is to my expectations therefore that at the end of your deliberations in this important symposium you will provide some insight into the following areas:-

1. Identification of technologies and strategies that will transform the tropical root crops from their rural subsistence

status to cash crops for both manufacturing and food processing industries.

2. Technologies that will reduce production bottlenecks and increase productivity to reach the biological potentials of these crops while conserving the environment in the countryside where these crops are grown.
3. Devise ways and means to enhance increased technical cooperation between National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), International Research Institutes and other stakeholders.

Mr. Chairman, I need not remind the eminent scientists gathered here today that “Information is power”. However I need to remind them that they are working for small-scale farmers who have no access to information. Therefore it is also my expectation that the deliberations and recommendations from your Symposium this

week will reach these farmers and all stakeholders in good time and in a user-friendly manner.

Before I conclude, I wish to remind our foreign friends not to spend all your five days in Tanzania within the walls of the Conference Hall. Kindly, try and organize your schedule so as to have a few hours for play and site seeing particularly some of the tourist attractions located a few hours drive from here.

On behalf of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, may I take this opportunity once again to express my gratitude and appreciation to International Society for Tropical Root Crops for organizing this symposium in Tanzania, East Africa. We welcome you to stage another meeting here any time you wish – KARIBUNI SANA.

Your excellencies, distinguished scientists, Ladies and Gentlemen, on this note I now have the pleasure and honour to declare the 13th symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops officially opened.

THANK YOU