**SPEECH BY HE GEOFF TOOTH,**

**AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO KENYA,**

**AT THE AUSTRALIA-AFRICA**

**PLANT BIOSECURITY PARTNERSHIP WORKHOP**

**MONDAY 27 OCTOBER 2014**

**WINDSOR GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, NAIROBI**

Mrs Sicily Kariuki, Principle Secretary, State Department of Agriculture

Michael Robinson, CEO Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (PBCRC), Australia

Dennis Rangi, Executive Director for International Development, Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International (CABI)

Denis Blight - Chief Executive, Crawford Fund, Australia

Mellissa Wood - Director Australian International Food Security Research Centre and General Manager Global Programs

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here today at this important event and

honoured to have the chance to speak to an audience with such a vital role to play in the economic future of Africa and Australia. Can I start by congratulating all the partner organisations involved in today.

At the June 2014 African Union Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African Heads of State committed to the goal of tripling intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services by 2025.

* This commitment highlights the extraordinary importance African leaders have placed on intra-African trade as means of enhancing Africa’s economic growth and building resilience for inevitable climate and global economic shocks.
* It is highly appropriate then that we hold this workshop in East Africa which is already responsible for about half of all intra-African trade. With a potential market of over 130 million people and an active East Africa Community taking the lead, the potential for even more growth from here is very high. Growth in this trade is an essential piece in the jig saw puzzle of solutions for raising many out of poverty in this part of the world and finding opportunities for those that will enter the job market as part of Africa’s extraordinary demographic of coming years.
* It is for this reason that Australia has designated trade - and its capacity to drive inclusive economic growth – as a fundamental pillar of Australia’s global strategies for development cooperation and economic diplomacy.
* Australia’s assistance to Africa is focussed on the productive sectors – in particular agriculture and extractive industries. These are areas in which demand has been strong from African governments. They have featured in nearly every conversation I have had with African ministers over recent years because these are areas in which Australia is recognised as possessing the capacity and comparative advantage to deliver expertise where it is most needed, and where it can drive productive growth.
* In agriculture, our development cooperation includes amongst other things:
  + support to agricultural research through the programs of ACIAR and its vital Food Security Centre (about which you will hear more in due course) and a partnership between the CSIRO and Bio-sciences east and central Africa;
  + support to African awardees to study agriculture through the Australian Awards program for both long term scholarships and tailored short courses; and
  + funding for private sector engagement in agricultural value chains through the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund.
* While these programs and more have helped make large strides in recent decades in agricultural productivity, energy, communications and transport infrastructure, much work remains to be done in order to realize the goal of tripling intra-African trade.
* Crucially, this must include developing effective strategies and policies to reduce barriers to agricultural trade and to raise competitiveness and market shares in and outside Africa.
* Along with the elimination of permissive trade tariffs, effective biosecurity – or pest and disease – controls are essential to enabling trade.
* Poor capacity to control the movement and burden of pests and diseases in Africa not only limits animal and crop production and quality, it limits the acceptability of agricultural products in trade, undermines prices, and ultimately limits returns to farmers and the national economy. It my many travels across Africa and in particular East Africa I have seen plenty of evidence of the damage that pests and diseases can do. The figures bandied about are staggering. Invasive alien species alone are estimated to cost the world 400 billion US dollars a year. An estimated 4.5 billion people across the globe may be chronically exposed to aflatoxin, which has killed many here in Kenya as well as significantly impacting on farm incomes.
* Africa is not starting at the beginning in this fight. Significant efforts have been made in recent years by a number of African national, regional and multi-lateral agencies and donors to enhance plant and animal protection capacity in Africa. Work continues to establish common protocols for pest and disease diagnostics, analysis and surveillance systems and phyto sanitary trade requirements.
* However, official biosecurity control capacity remains too weak for the challengers ahead. In sub-Saharan countries significant efforts are required to achieve adequate and effective biosecurity control within national agencies and regional economic communities.
* It is with this need in mind that the Australian-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership aims to use the world class skills and expertise of Australian plant biosecurity institutions and agencies to build skills and capacity of managers and decision makers involved in plant biosecurity control in eastern Africa.
* The partnership aims to bring benefit to both African participants by linking them with expert Australian biosecurity agencies; and to Australia by enhancing relationships and ties with participating country governments and agencies. All of this will contribute to trade and economic relations. It will hopefully encourage much greater Australian agricultural investment in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

* This workshop is an important event as it will set the priorities and scene for an ongoing partnership between Australian and African to develop biosecurity capacity.
* The enhanced skills and capacity that will arise from this will help address regional plant pest and disease issues, facilitate intra-African and international trade in plant products, and thereby the livelihood of farmers.
* It will help improve agricultural productivity and sustainability, strengthen agricultural value chains and overcome regulatory impediments, while building capacity for agricultural innovation in Africa.
* Biosecurity is a global challenge and a stronger global biosecurity system is in all our interests. But it benefits trading nations most of all. By helping developing nations with crop protection and export opportunities we strengthen a trading system on which Australia too depends.
* We need to ensure that this is just one chapter in an ongoing story that sees professionals from both sides of the Indian Ocean deepen relationships and find ever more areas of cooperation. For our part we hope alumni from this course will become part of Australia’s Alumni network, a network which can offer you all ongoing professional development and leadership opportunities.
* And I am very happy to announce today that we will be providing another $400,000 per year from the Australia Awards scholarship program to allow the biosecurity initiative to expand its reach and impact.

It is always smart to end with good news so I will. My congratulations again to all the partner organisations and to all of you. All that is left for me to do now is to declare this workshop officially open, to wish you an exciting and productive two days ahead and to look forward to meeting you all at my Residence this evening where I will toast you and your work with something more appropriate for that time of day. Thank you.