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Draft talking points for H.E. David Collins, Canadian High Commission to Kenya at the official Launch of the Biosciences eastern and Central Africa (BecA) Hub

- **Your Excellency Honourable Mwai Kibaki President & Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kenya**
- **The Minister for Livestock Development. Honourable Mohamed Abdi Kuti**
- **Dr. Romano Kiome , Permanent .Secretary for Agriculture**
- **Chair of *ILRI* , Board of Trustees- Knut Hove**
- ***ILRI* Director General - Carlos Seré**
- **Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- It is a pleasure to be here, and as Canada's representative to Kenya, I feel especially honored to be invited to say a few words at this event.
- Canada has had a long history of cooperation with and support to Africa.

- Canada, through its Development Agency (CIDA) supports the sustainable development of the African continent, in response to the needs and priorities of the individual countries, as well as regional and sub-regional groupings.
- In 2002, at the Kananaskis G8 Summit, leaders adopted the Africa Action Plan, in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, better known as NEPAD. The plan reaffirmed the partnership between the G8 and African countries.
- Canada took a leading role in supporting the NEPAD and the G8 Africa Action Plan with the creation of the \$500 million Canada Fund for Africa.
- The Canada Fund for Africa focused on the key challenges identified by NEPAD and provided an opportunity to showcase Canadian leadership in pursuit of effective development through a series of large-scale, flagship initiatives.
- Within this context, in May 2003, Canada announced a contribution of \$30 million to establish the Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BecA) initiative in Kenya.
- BecA is the first of four networks of centres of excellence across Africa to strengthen Africa's scientific and technological development.

- Located and managed by the International Livestock Research Institute in Nairobi, the BecA-hub, in collaboration with the regional nodes and national laboratories, allows eastern and central African countries to develop and apply bioscience research and expertise.
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- According to the 2008 World Development Report, most poor people living in rural areas earn their income from agriculture.
- The report further states that investments in agriculture are two to four times more effective in reducing poverty than investments in other sectors.
- In addition, agriculture is at the very heart of African life. Most Africans live and work in rural areas; despite their immense natural resources, one African in three goes to bed hungry every night. Women, who are the main producers of crops consumed by families, often lack access to credit, seeds, technical training, and other support that could help them improve production.
- BecA, a partnership between CIDA, ILRI and NEPAD, is a significant initiative focusing on strengthening the agricultural research pillar of NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in meeting the goal of 6% annual growth in agricultural productivity by 2015.

- Canada's support also assisted the NEPAD Secretariat in the establishment and development of the other three networks of Centres of Excellence in North, West and Southern Africa, within the framework of the African Biosciences Initiative (ABI).
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:** Canada is pleased to celebrate the achievements that have been made in establishing this particular Centre of Excellence in Bioscience in Agriculture.
- BecA is conducting important research that will help address key agricultural issues, including those facing small-scale African farmers, the majority of whom are women.
- Our investment in BecA has supported the construction of new and renovation of existing facilities, including laboratories. With the completion of construction, the Hub is now in full operation, with a number of significant research programs underway, and quickly gaining regional and international recognition as a world-class facility to support capacity for Biosciences in Africa.
- Today, African scientists and university researchers do not have to leave the continent to conduct their biological research; rather, research can now be done by Africans for Africa at this new facility.
- Indeed, this hub provides a focal point for the African scientific community to address agricultural, health and environmental-related problems of the highest priority.

- Further this hub will enable African scientists and researchers play a major role in helping Africa meet its Millennium Development Goals by 2015 as a more productive and profitable agricultural sector is a critical component in the successful attainment of the MDGs.
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:** Canada also encourages the strengthening of the strong relationships that have been built amongst partners involved in the establishment of the BecA network including the hub, and encourages others to build on this investment.
- For instance, the facility is fast becoming a magnet for a number of projects that are using modern biotechnology to solve problems faced by small-scale farmers in Africa. For example, I am informed a large number of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation projects are being conducted here at BecA.
- Further, as a result of this hub, a new Bio-Innovate Program, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency, is being implemented at these facilities.
- These exciting developments emerging from Canada's investment will be one of the many success stories that highlight CIDA's work in the area of research and development, one of the priorities of Canada's food security strategy.
- In conclusion, I am excited to be here today to witness the official opening of the hub not only because Canada funded the

facilities but largely because it will assist African scientists to find African solutions to key agricultural issues.

- It is exciting to see the birth of a hub that will play a key role in ensuring that Africa drives its own agenda in regards to Agriculture and strengthen the research pillar of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program.
- Thank you.