Speech by the Deputy Minister for Lands, Housing And Human Settlements Development
Hon. Dr. Angelina Mabula at the Opening of “Just Governance on Land Grab: Implications for Tanzanians and Africa” Conference Held at St. Gasper Centre in Dodoma From 14th to 15th September 2016

Leaders of Tanzania Episcopal Council,
Leaders of Other Organizations Co-sponsoring this Conference,
Conference Participants,
Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

It gives me enormous pleasure to join you today for a conference on one of the sensitive topics globally. Indeed, the conference has come at the right time; the time when the government and many other land stakeholders are actively engaged to ensure the problem is addressed.

Allow me to thank the organizers for inviting me to officiate at this conference. I sincerely commend the efforts by the Tanzania Episcopal Council (TEC), the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), the Missionaries of the Precious Blood (CPPS) and a coalition of civil society organizations for organizing this conference which brings together environmentalists, academics, policy makers, farmers, religious leaders, civil society groups, and other stakeholders to deliberate on land grabbing.

**Dear Conference Participants:** I understand, this conference will provide an opportunity to develop a comprehensive action plan to engage law and policy makers at the local, national and regional levels and the affected communities. This conference is a platform for discussing a corporate driven development narrative, advocacy for sustainable use of land resources, strengthening a link among various faith-based organizations, civil society groups, and the media in addressing the problem of land grabbing and its effects.

**Dear Conference Participants:** I also hope that in this conference you are going to have scholarly and non-scholarly presentations, discussions and may be heated debates on this topic. The government values and always pays heed to discussions that lead to giving solutions to complex problems. It will thus be of great interest to us in government if you would share with us the resolutions of this conference so that if there is anything requiring government’s intervention, proper and timely action could be taken.
Dear Conference Participants: Land grabbing in Africa is alarming and it is indeed threatening peace and prosperity of the continent. There are however different ways of looking at this problem. At times, there has been a misunderstanding among stakeholders as to what amounts to land grabbing. I would like to urge you, during this conference, to debate and possibly come up with a proper definition of this phenomenon. I am emphasizing this because on several occasions the government has been forced to clarify some incidents incorrectly reported as land grabs, especially by the international media, civil society organizations and land activist groups. Sometimes, land grabbing cases have been exaggerated and blown out of proportion to the extent of scaring genuine land investors that are much needed to develop our economies and thus improve our people’s lives.

Dear Conference Participants: We all must remember that land is a resource that should be used profitably by the owners. The government has been working hard to create good investment environment for both citizens and foreigners, large and small land investors. Some of these initiatives include promoting land parceling, registration and issuance of title deeds – both Certificates of Right of Occupancy (CROs) and Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs). Unfortunately, sometimes some of these efforts by the government have been incorrectly interpreted by some groups of people who have been blaming the government for allocating land to large investors. Even when government land is allocated to investors, some people would still blame the government for land grabbing. This may partly be due to limited knowledge of our policies and laws or one obtaining information from wrong sources. Land grabbing topic has also attracted even those with limited knowledge about land administration policy and investment. Some of these people have become popular speakers. Some irresponsible politicians have also at times used this phenomenon to win elections. If we allow this to continue, we may end-up losing focus in addressing genuine cases of land grabbing. Again, I would like to urge you to address this too.

Dear Conference Participants: As we understand, in Tanzania land is public property and is vested in the President of the United Republic of Tanzania as a trustee of all citizens. Land administration in Tanzania is guided by the National Land Policy of 1995. Among others, two main pieces of legislation were enacted following the Policy; these are the Land Act Cap. 113 and the Village Land Act Cap. 114. These are the principal pieces of legislation for land administration in Tanzania.

This policy and legal foundation is what differentiates Tanzania from many other countries in Africa. When we compare Tanzania and other countries in Africa, it is clear that we are better off. The land policy and land laws address land grabbing problem. The Village Land Act is the main legislation protecting rural lands from land grabbing by imposing a lengthy
process of converting village land to general land. According this law, it is not possible to acquire a piece of land in rural areas for non-residents without adequate involvement of the village authorities.

**Dear Conference Participants:** One of the monumental changes that come with the National Land Policy of 1995 was the recognition that bare land has value. This triggered a ‘rush’ for land. Many rich people have been busy buying and hoarding land, both in urban and rural areas. We are aware that a lot of people from urban areas have been buying large tracts of land in the rural areas. Sometimes, this is done without following the requirements of the law and laid down procedures.

The government has been taking action as and when such cases are reported. We are currently doing rural land audit to identify owners of large chunks of land in villages, especially those owned by non-villagers. The aim of this exercise is to be sure whether proper procedures were followed during acquisition of such lands. The exercise is also aimed at discouraging land hoarding and speculation. So, whereas many people look at land grabbing as externally driven, the opposite could also be true.

**Dear Conference Participants:** Currently, my Ministry is in the process of reviewing the land policy. Stakeholders meetings have been conducting around the country. New ideas are still welcome. The exercise is meant to address policy gaps reflecting the 20 years of implementing the policy. The on-going exercise to review the land policy is also aimed at coming up with a policy implementation strategy. Many people still agree that our land policy is still one of the best land policies in Africa, but there have been some problems in implementing some of the provisions of the land laws. However, it also true that over the past 20 years, a lot has happened; we thus need to review the land policy to take on board the changes. The policy review exercise, will identify areas that require new policy intervention and those requiring enforcement of the existing laws.

**Dear Leaders and Conference Participants:** Without taking much of your time, I once again, would like to commend the organizers of this important conference. It is my hope that you are going to have very fruitful discussions. The diversity and good mix of participants will certainly add value to the discussions. I will be very happy to receive a copy of the resolutions of this conference.

With these few words, I now have the honour to declare this conference officially opened.

Thank you listening.