Introductory remarks

Your Excellency Dr. Dlamini-Zuma,
Honorable members of parliament,
Members of the AfDB Board of Directors,
Vice-Presidents and Senior Management of the Bank,
Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of Independent Development Evaluation, welcome to the AfDB Evaluation Week. We are glad to see you here in such large numbers. We already had some very successful sessions yesterday, on knowledge from evaluations, gender and evaluation, and evaluation criteria. So we can well and truly say that there is a strong interest in evaluation, and this gladdens our hearts.

We have organized this Evaluation Week under the theme of Strengthening Development Impact because we believe that evaluation has a role to play in achieving Africa’s transformation agenda, as set out in the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the AfDB’s High 5s. Monitoring, evaluation and research are important sources of evidence and learning, about what has worked, what has not, and why. These lessons, if taken into account and integrated into new policies, strategies, projects and processes, will help to improve the quality of design and implementation, and will make interventions more effective, efficient and sustainable. This in turn will strengthen the development impact that Africa seeks.

Over the next two days, we will explore this role of evaluation and learning in more depth. We are very excited to have with us Her Excellency Minister Dlamini Zuma, who as Chairperson of the African
Union Commission at the time that Agenda 2063 was adopted, and currently Minister for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of South Africa, is uniquely placed to provide her views on the relationship between the two, which we are very keen to hear.

We will also explore the contribution that evaluation and learning can make to two thematic areas that are of great importance to Africa: infrastructure development, in particular through public-private partnerships, and inclusion through agriculture. These are areas in which much research and evaluation has already been done, and we will hear what difference they have made, and how we can put lessons learned into action for greater results. But in general, the supply of and demand for evaluations remain low in Africa, and in the final session we will examine how we can redress this through partnerships. We look forward to the debates and discussions over the next two days, and encourage you to share your knowledge and experience during the question-and-answer sessions, so that we may all learn from each other.

Ladies and gentlemen, evaluation has been called “speaking truth to power”. But it’s not always easy to get the message across. The truth is not always welcome. Unwelcome information is sometimes denied or dismissed, experts disdained. But that should not stop us in our quest for credible evidence. We must maintain high quality standards, rigorous methodologies, and careful analysis. We must engage with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, to take their views into account and make sure we are meeting their knowledge needs. We must share our knowledge, by publishing our work and through events like this one. Then, evaluations will be influential, and have the desired effect, namely to strengthen development impact.
With that, ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to welcome you again to the Evaluation Week, and I invite Pierre Guislain, AfDB Vice-President for Private Sector, Infrastructure and Industrialization, to make some remarks on behalf of President Adesina. Thank you.