

**36th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**  
**Ministerial Session: Item 11: Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs**

10 March 2022 (1030-1800 hrs)

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Honorable Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, FAO Director-General, and staff, it is a privilege and pleasure for me to present this statement on behalf of the Philippine Government.

First, allow me to congratulate the Government of Bangladesh for the excellent arrangements in this beautiful city of Dhaka. It is a pleasure to be here.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past two years, the Philippines has been confronted with the spread of a virus, COVID-19, which has affected several thousand of our fellow citizens. We know the devastating effects of the disease. We know the pain it has caused millions of families across the planet.

We have also seen how much there is to gain by building strong food and agriculture supply chains.

In the Philippines, the impact of the pandemic has been aggravated by the effects of climate change.

Our water supplies are dwindling even as the need to feed an ever-growing number of people becomes more urgent.

We maintain that our collective response to both must be broad, science-based, inclusive, and inventive.

We must create efficient and resilient food production and delivery systems not only for today's growing populations – but for future generations, as well.

I am pleased to report that the Philippine Government's response to this imperative has been elevated into a national policy.

We have made food security a defining national goal. Our immediate objective is to modernize our agriculture and fisheries systems, making them more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

We thank FAO for asking its members about our national priorities for it to provide further support. All the program priority areas identified in the FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031 along the themes of better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life are

important and interlinked. If we are to identify the top priority per theme where we are making a call to accelerate implementation, these are as follows:

For Better Production, let's prioritize "Green Innovation." We need to continue creating sustainable crops, livestock, fisheries, and forestry production systems -supported by green technologies and better policies.

For Better Nutrition, we have to ensure safe food for everyone. We need to continue improving our food safety regulations, integrating sanitary and phytosanitary control measures and policies throughout the food value chain.

For a Better Environment, we need to continue embarking on a massive program to protect our environment, ADAPT to the current and future effects of climate change and mitigate its impacts, and undertake climate risk assessments to inform our measures during the typhoon season and other natural disasters.

For a Better Life and to reduce poverty, it is imperative to increase public and private investments in our food systems. We also need support in our farm consolidation and clustering strategy to increase efficiency and viability.

In the process, we are helping entrepreneurs create jobs that – in turn – provide greater economic security and equal opportunity, driven by education, digital technology, sustainable energy, innovation, and infrastructure. The Youth, Women, and Family Farmers will need to continuously be capacitated as they also have crucial roles in transforming our agri-food systems towards competitiveness, resiliency, and sustainability.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in all four of these endeavors and the rest of the program priority areas identified in FAO's Strategic Framework, we look to the counsel and technical assistance of our partners in the international community and organizations like the FAO in formulating or refining policies and in boosting our resources and capacities.

We are eight years away from 2030, the year when we all pledged to achieve our shared objectives under the UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.

The Philippine Government holds that -- at this historic moment, in the aftermath of an extraordinary global crisis -- our shared success demands greater international collaboration, cooperation, and exchange.

Thank you