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Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

1. Thank you, Chairperson. Let me join the expressions of gratitude to the Government of Fiji, and thanks to the FAO Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative, and everyone in the secretariat.
2. I would also like to take advantage of this opportunity to bear witness to the support that the FAO Director-General, Mr Graziano da Silva, provides to CFS.
3. Ministers, colleagues: I am attending all FAO Regional Conferences to present what the CFS has been doing to support you, and the road ahead.
4. Please refer to the Report of the 44th Session of CFS¹ held at FAO headquarters last October, where you will find a summary of what has been achieved since you met at the Regional Conference of Putrajaya two years ago.
5. In that document, you will find that CFS is delivering on all its commitments by providing a platform for discussion on issues of women's empowerment, rural-urban dynamics (including the challenges of urbanization and rural transformation), responsible investments in agriculture, governance of land tenure, and monitoring, among many other areas, as well as delivering policy recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets, sustainable livestock, and sustainable forests; I am asking the Secretary to insert a link to that document in the Conference report.
6. Ministers, colleagues: we are well aware that, despite our efforts, there is still a lot to be done so that all of our citizens are free from hunger and malnutrition.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mv030e.pdf>

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Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



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7. I will not lecture you on how to do this; you know the challenges we face because of social inequalities, climate change, migration, trade obstacles, soil degradation and other natural disasters.
8. The Asia region continues to be home to almost two-thirds of the world's nearly 800 million hungry people. The fight against hunger is slowing, as indications are that the number of hungry people may have already begun to rise. In 2016, there were 8 million more people hungry than there were in 2015.
9. In the Pacific sub-region, obesity is a major threat to food and nutrition security and, on average, the consumption of food items considered unhealthy is on the rise. A key challenge is to reorient food systems in a way that will help promote healthier diets through supportive food and trade policies, education and awareness campaigns.
10. This means that many countries in the Asia and the Pacific region risk not meeting the 2030 target of ending hunger and food insecurity.
11. Raising agricultural productivity and alleviating poverty while protecting the region's natural resources base are essential drivers for eradicating hunger and malnutrition in all forms.
12. What I wish to do here is to let you know how you can help improve the Committee on World Food Security and, at the same time, to emphasize how a stronger CFS can better serve you.
13. CFS is a multistakeholder structure; it is the most inclusive platform in the United Nations: the latest plenary in October issued accreditations to more than fifteen hundred delegates, representing also hundreds of non-state actors.
14. CFS convenes member countries as well as multiple stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, academia, research centres, financial institutions, philanthropies, the three Rome-based United Nations agencies (because, alongside FAO, CFS also includes the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] and the World Food Programme [WFP]), as well as other UN bodies, such as the World Health Organization, and an impressive list of international institutions.
15. With an evidence-based approach and acting in close collaboration across the international system, CFS is the most relevant platform in the world today for achieving policy coherence and convergence in food security and nutrition.
16. This is especially true in light of the challenges of fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in reaching SDG 2: zero hunger.
17. In this context, I encourage those of you whose governments have volunteered to undertake a national review on SDG progress in New York next July, to place emphasis on how policy recommendations emanating from CFS are furthering your country's progress to accomplish the 2030 objectives.
18. Ministers, colleagues: the key of CFS is its inclusiveness, because state actors and the other stakeholders I mentioned discuss and design policies as partners.
19. This collaborative partnership is what allows CFS policy products to have global validity and legitimacy, such as voluntary guidelines on many spheres, including on the Right to Food, Tenure Governance, and Responsible Investments in Agriculture, among others, as well as action-oriented tools like the Framework for Action in Protracted Crises.
20. These policy outcomes, as we call them at CFS, are providing countries with effective instruments for combating hunger and malnutrition.
21. The FAO decentralized network offers guidance and support for implementing policy recommendations emanating from CFS. This is what FAO delivered to my country, the Dominican

Republic, when we drafted food security legislation so that the right to food that is enshrined in our Constitution could translate into concrete reality.

22. At the same time, if we want the inclusive processes of CFS to generate policy recommendations which benefit from the strongest possible legitimacy and highest level of impact, all member countries are expected to participate actively and constructively both through their governments and their Rome-based representatives: we must add value to the debates and take full ownership of the outcomes!

23. From a developing country perspective, our contributions to CFS are twofold: identifying the specific areas in which we could make use of policy advice, and sharing our experiences.

24. When we articulate our policy needs at CFS, we set the agenda on how to achieve zero hunger and adequate nutrition, while calling global attention to the relevance of FAO in particular and the multilateral system in general; this is one critical way for developing countries to influence the worldwide consensus on what needs to be done for eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

25. When we share lessons learned and best practices, we enrich the wealth of knowledge that will lead to accomplishing SDG-2 in our countries and in the whole world.

26. The Committee needs to hear more of how we are making progress, what challenges we have found, and how we are overcoming them.

27. In fact, the best way to exchange information that is useful is to replicate the CFS approach at national and regional levels.

28. Issues of food security and nutrition, as you well know, are extremely complex; to fully understand them—and to take meaningful action towards eradicating hunger and malnutrition—we have to work across disciplines and institutions.

29. This means that we must build partnerships from within our countries and at regional level; to this end, FAO's technical cooperation has also been instrumental in supporting the Dominican Republic, where a national platform mirrors the CFS structure, placing the focal point at the highest level, the President's Office, and bringing together all relevant stakeholders.

30. Once again I affirm the importance for every single country delegation of Asia and the Pacific to engage in the CFS discussions taking place in Rome. You could increase your strength as a region by finding consensus positions so you can intervene with a single voice in the thematic working groups and, especially, in the CFS Bureau.

31. I call on you to ensure that your delegates to the Bureau, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and New Zealand, bring to that body, which is chaired by the speaker, a regional perspective representing the common interest of Asia and the Pacific; CFS needs your regional support so that it can continue to expand its openness, flexibility, and transparency, so as to consolidate its relevance for the benefit of our countries.

32. Regarding CFS workstreams, in addition to calling all countries in the region to become actively involved in all topics, I ask that we pay special attention to the ongoing debates on nutrition.

33. Indeed, in 2018-19 CFS is putting particular focus on nutrition and food systems, with a view to developing voluntary guidelines that will support our national policies on such a fundamental area.

34. Even though many countries from this region do not currently have resident representations in Rome, your active participation in nutrition, as well as in all other CFS workstreams, can be made in writing or by electronic means; I earnestly encourage you to do so.

35. Ministers, colleagues: experts tell us that achieving sustainable food security is not enough; we also need adequate nutrition to deliver socio-economic transformation and true freedom from the scandal of hunger.

36. We all agree that designing and implementing more effective strategies to achieve the goal of zero hunger is a matter of the greatest urgency; to lift the shadow of hunger, which eclipses the human condition, is a moral obligation for all of us that enjoy food security and is, as well, a political obligation for our governments.

37. As I said at the outset, I am attending all the FAO Regional Conferences as CFS Chair to convey the message that the Committee can give a hand in facilitating this mission.

38. Summing up, I am taking the following messages to the Ministers attending the FAO Regional Conferences in every continent:

- first, that CFS is the most inclusive platform for global coordination, and for policy coherence and convergence on food security and nutrition;
- second, that to be effective in providing the guidance needed, CFS requires our active engagement through our delegations to the Rome-based UN agencies or from our Capitals;
- third, that genuine ownership of CFS and its policy products also involves making financial contributions to support the Committee's work, which is disproportionately sponsored by earmarked funds from developed countries, which naturally tend to reflect on priorities;
- fourth, that each and every country in Asia and the Pacific, and indeed all developing countries, would benefit from establishing national platforms to tackle issues of food security and nutrition that mirror the CFS inclusive structure; and
- fifth, that the continued relevance of CFS depends upon advancing and successfully concluding the current process for policy coherence and convergence in nutrition.

39. Ministers and colleagues: I hope to continue this conversation with all of you at the next session of the Committee on World Food Security at FAO headquarters in Rome this October; you are all invited to share your progresses in food security and nutrition, as we achieve SDG 2! Thank you.