

April 2014



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة للأمم
المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and
Agriculture
Organization
of the
United Nations

Organisation des
Nations Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones Unidas
para la
Alimentación y la
Agricultura

FAO Regional Conference for Africa

TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Tunis, Tunisia, 24-28 March 2014

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Director-General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Delegates, it is a privilege for me to participate in this 28th Regional Conference for Africa, and to speak to you on some of the major issues that impact on the work of our Organization at the start of the 2014-2015 biennium. At the outset allow me to convey appreciation to you Mr Chairman, and through you to your Government and to the people of Tunisia, for the hospitality provided to all participants of the 28th Regional Conference for Africa in this beautiful city of Tunis.

As this is the first time I address this Regional Conference since being elected as the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council by the FAO Conference in June last year, and as a fellow African, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my heartfelt appreciation for the confidence you have shown in me. Furthermore, I recall with utmost gratitude the decision you made during the 27th Regional Conference, in Brazzaville, Congo, chaired by His Excellency Mr Rigobert Maboundou, of endorsing the proposal of my candidature to the post by acclamation. I have taken up this position with great dedication, and I am committed to steering the Council towards more effective deliberations, engaging with Members and FAO Management on key issues, in order to find the common ground and move together in a spirit of reciprocal trust - as exemplified by the recent launch of the preparatory process for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), and the Independent Review of Governance Reform.

Members' interest, sense of ownership and engagement in the work of FAO is greater than ever as the Organization tackles the increasingly complex and persistent challenges of extreme poverty, food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition and environmental threats which continue to plague our continent, against a background of global resource limitations.

In my first six months of office I have had many opportunities to witness such renewed commitment and understanding by the Members, not least during the reformulation of the

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
a FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



mj913e

Organization's Strategic Objectives and the transformational changes initiated by Dr. Graziano, the Director-General of FAO.. The renewed Strategic Framework and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) for 2014-2015 also reflect the regional priorities formulated by you at the Regional Conference held two years ago, such as the Programmatic Regional Initiative (Strategic Objective 5) "The Sahel and the Horn of Africa". In this context, the "2014-2016 Sahel Strategic Response Plan" was launched at FAO Headquarters last month.

The implementation of the PWB for 2014-2015 began in January 2014, after the December 2013 session of Council had endorsed adjustments to the PWB, in accordance with the decision and guidance of the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013. Implementation will require dedicated and concerted efforts both by FAO staff, at all levels, and the Members. At the same time, planning has to start this year for the programmes for the 2016-17 biennium. Hence the need for inputs and guidance from Technical Committees and Regional Conferences, in keeping with their role as FAO Governing Bodies.

That said, I should also mention how encouraged I am to see progress in the way Regional Conference guidance is reported back to the Council and also to the Conference. This is still work in progress, but I believe we are on track as I have seen that the way regional perspectives are taken into consideration and followed up during the inter-sessional period continues to be fine-tuned. Of course, much depends on the clarity of the guidance contained in the Report you will be submitting both to the June 2015 session of Conference, and to the June 2014 session of Council. The Report of the Regional Conference for Africa will inform the FAO Conference and Council on the outcome of your discussions, which over the course of this week will focus on the key challenge of meeting needs of growing populations in the context of increased scarce natural resources and climate change.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, the *Report of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO* in 2007 highlighted governance as central to a strengthened FAO, if the Organization is to meet the expectations of its Members. As you know, the follow-up *Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal*, driven by the Members, was subsequently implemented from 2010 to 2013.

You may also recall that the *Immediate Plan of Action* envisaged a comprehensive review of progress on governance reforms and their effectiveness after a six year period. So, in December 2013 the Council endorsed arrangements for an Independent Review of Governance Reform, as well as the appointment of Ms Maxine Olson and Ms Nadia Hijab to the review team for this exercise.

The review team is interacting with Members at selected Governing Body sessions to seek views on progress made so far, what remains to be done, and what could be done differently to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FAO's Governing Bodies. The outcome of its review will serve as input to the discussion and assessment of governance reforms by the Conference in June 2015. Ms Maxine Olson, Review Team member, is present at this Regional Conference and will be interfacing with as many of you as possible this week to seek your views on progress made so far in the implementation of Governance Reform.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, as I am sure you know, this year FAO, together with the World Health Organization (WHO), will convene the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) from 19 to 21 November at FAO Headquarters in Rome. The preparations for this important event are progressing well. Your interest, engagement and support during the preparations as well as your presence and active participation at Conference will help mobilize the levels of international cooperation needed for more effective action to end malnutrition.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, the Africa Region has continued to demonstrate its renewed commitment to agriculture, and I warmly congratulate you on the various initiatives which have been taken, including the recent Africa declaration of 2014 as "The African Union's Year of Agriculture and Food Security" with a sustainable agricultural intensification and development.

Indeed, in concluding, let me reiterate that it is exactly this renewed emphasis on agriculture that makes it the duty of this Regional Conference to indicate clear and concrete priorities for the Africa Region.

I firmly believe that the continuing engagement and commitment of the governments in Africa will do much to ensure that FAO continues to serve you well, and to be an effective agent in the struggle to free the world of hunger and malnutrition.

Thank you.