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Food and
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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 DIRECTOR GENERAL

*Your Excellency Mehdi Jomaa, Head of the Government of Tunisia,
Your Excellency Lassad Lachaal, Minister for Agriculture of Tunisia, Chairperson of the
28th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa,
Your Excellency Rigobert Maboundou, Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Congo,
outgoing Chair of the Regional Conference,
Mr Wilfred Ngirwa, Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council,
Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of NEPAD,
Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, Delegates,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,*

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. C'est un plaisir de vous recevoir ici à Tunis pour la Conférence Régionale de la FAO pour l'Afrique. Et je voudrais avec vous remercier le Gouvernement de la Tunisie qui organise cet événement. Spécialement le Chef du Gouvernement qui nous fait l'honneur de sa présence.
2. Cette conférence est significative pour la FAO et les pays africains car les décisions qui y sont prises ont un impact sur les priorités de l'organisation et comment nous allons travailler.
3. Je saisis l'occasion pour vous féliciter pour la célébration de l'anniversaire de l'indépendance de la Tunisie.
4. Laissez-moi maintenant revenir à l'anglais s'il vous plaît.
5. Let me begin by going back to our previous Regional Conference, in 2012, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. In that meeting, President Dennis Sassou-Nguesso urged for increased solidarity among African countries to achieve food security and proposed the launching of the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund. In less than 2 years, the fund is operational and housed in FAO, co-led with the African Union, and tomorrow we will contemplate the first 6 projects with 2 million dollars each.
6. The establishment of the fund is one more step towards a food secure Africa.

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7. Last January, the Executive Council of the African Union endorsed a 2025 zero hunger target for Africa. African leaders are set to formally adopt this target at the AU Summit later this year.
8. The bold 2025 zero hunger target for Africa will be the subject of a Ministerial Roundtable tomorrow in this Conference.
9. And I hope that we will give strong support to this target.
10. Let me add that the African Year of Agriculture and Food Security is a golden opportunity to further advance in the direction of the hunger free future we want for Africa.
11. In 2014 we also commemorate the International Year of Family Farming, that FAO is honored to coordinate on behalf of the UN System.
12. Let's use this opportunity to put small farmers, artisans, fishers, pastoralists, forest collectors and indigenous communities at the center of our agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. As of today, around 60 developing countries have already reached the MDG hunger target or have managed to maintain undernourishment levels below 5 percent of their total population.
14. 14 are from Africa. They include: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Djibouti, Libya, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Togo and Tunisia.
15. But Africa still has many challenges to overcome.
16. Over 220 million Africans are undernourished. That is nearly one of every five Africans. And 40 million more than in 1990-92, when we started collecting data. So hunger has been increasing on this continent.
17. There are many reasons for food insecurity in Africa. They include protracted crises and insufficient funds to invest in agriculture and food security.
18. Conflicts remain another challenge and can have a huge impact on food security.
19. I wish to take this opportunity to express FAO's commitment to supporting the Central African Republic and South Sudan in these difficult moments.
20. FAO is responding to these crises using its recently established emergency protocol. We are providing immediate support to crisis-hit populations combined with a longer-term view to build resilience. We call this new protocol the 3R stages: first, relief; second, recovery; and third, resilience that paves the way for further sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. I am confident that Africa can reach peace and stability and achieve food security for all Africans in the near future.
22. The region's economic growth rate is above the global average. And most (7 out of 10) of the world's fastest growing economies are in Africa.
23. The challenge is to translate this growth into social inclusion.
24. Agriculture, rural development and support to women and youth can make this happen. So this was a fitting choice of the theme for this meeting.
25. Africa is expected to remain mainly rural until mid-century. And around 90 percent of its rural households engage in farming activities.
26. Africa is also the world's youngest region. Over half its population is under 25. Over the next decade, 11 million people are expected to enter its labour market every year.
27. But salaries are low in the rural sector, informality is high, agriculture is not considered as attractive by many of the region's youth, and social protection is not always available for rural families in critical situations.

28. This Regional Conference will address these important issues. Youth, agribusiness and rural development is an agenda item in your discussion.
29. Likewise, I am glad that social protection is also on the Conference's agenda.
30. Let me also highlight the potential that exists when we link social protection to support to family farmers. This is a combination that can greatly contribute to local development in rural areas and that should be explored whenever possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

31. As you know, FAO has been working hard over the past two years to renew our Organization. Let me give you a few examples of how we are doing this.
32. First, we brought the FAO reform to a successful close. The transformational change that we embarked on in 2012 builds on this process.
33. Second, we mapped a new route through a consultative and bottom-up process in which Regional Conferences played a crucial role.
34. We now have a sharpened focus and a truly results-based Program of Work that transforms our five strategic objectives into concrete results.
35. Third, we strengthened our decentralized offices so that we are closer to you and can translate our strategic framework into concrete results at the regional, subregional and national levels.
36. And, fourth, we now have clear strategies for partnerships with civil society and the private sector, approved by FAO Members.
37. I could give you more examples, but I will stop here.
38. I do want to reaffirm that all the changes we are making have only one goal: improve the support we provide to you, in meeting your food security and agricultural development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

39. I would now like to show how the changes at FAO benefit Africa.
40. The first visible result is our increased technical presence at the regional and subregional levels.
41. I am also pleased to inform that 32 Member States in the region have already approved their Country Programming Frameworks and 15 are being developed.
42. We also enhanced our Technical Cooperation Program. It is now a much more strategic instrument, better integrated with the CPFs and linked to our strategic objectives.
43. And the combination of greater efficiency and the decision to focus at the country level has allowed us to increase TCP allotment in two percentage points, to a total of 13.4 percent of our regular budget.
44. TCP funds earmarked for Africa have increased and are now close to 44 million dollars.
45. The changes will make the TCP a catalyst to bring in additional funding that is often needed to bring to life the policy proposals that you have.
46. In this regard, I want to recall FAO's ongoing support to countries developing and implementing CAADP compacts and investment plans.
47. So far, 40 countries have signed CAADP Compacts and nearly 30 have Agriculture Investment Plans. Three Regional Economic Communities have also signed regional compacts and two regional investment plans have been prepared.
48. FAO has also supported countries in developing proposals for funding under the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. Fifteen African countries have since received a combined total of over 560 million dollars from this fund.
49. I also want to say that civil society and the private sector need to be part of the renewed partnership to end hunger in Africa.

50. I also would like to acknowledge that the private sector participation in rural development is often controversial.
51. I understand the concerns, but we cannot turn our backs to them.
52. It is our task to ensure that investments safeguard the rights of vulnerable communities and contribute to sustainable development. That is, to economic growth that is socially inclusive and environmentally responsible.
53. It is for this reason that the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure approved in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security, are so important.
54. FAO is now supporting their implementation in some 50 countries, most of them in Africa.
55. The CFS is also discussing the Principles of Responsible Agricultural Investments that will complement the voluntary guidelines.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

56. We have done a lot until now. But our work is still only starting. And all our efforts will only really matter if we transform our vision into reality.
57. The main instruments we have to deliver results at the regional level are the regional initiatives.
58. The Africa region has three regional initiatives in different stages of implementation. They are aligned to the reviewed strategic framework and respond to priorities you have identified.
59. The first regional initiative supports your renewed efforts to end hunger by 2025.
60. The second initiative promotes the sustainable intensification of agricultural production and commercialization.
61. The third regional initiative looks to build resilience in Africa, with a special focus on the Sahel and Horn of Africa.
62. These regional initiatives have been presented at the senior officers meeting earlier this week. I hope to have your support in their implementation, and look forward to receiving your suggestions on how we can make them even more useful to you.
63. I want to end by saying that the millions of people that suffer from hunger in Africa do not belong only to Africa. They are not your hungry. They belong to humanity as a whole.
64. In the same way, sustainable development of Africa does not benefit only Africa. All of us win when living standards rise, when economic growth is combined with social inclusion and is environmentally responsible.
65. It is our common responsibility to ensure the right to food of every single person. Governments must lead the way, but this needs to be a joint effort. I would like to thank the African Union and NEPAD for their presence, in particular Mr Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of NEPAD.
66. I am confident that we are on the right track.
67. FAO looks forward to receiving your guidance and views at this Regional Conference. And I hope that in the years to come we will be able to count on the same support you have given us until now.
68. I wish you fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Tunis.
69. Thank you for your attention.