



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

منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

E

# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**Thirty-fifth Session**

**1-4 September 2020<sup>1</sup>**

**Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional  
Conference for Asia and the Pacific**

*Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:*

APRC Secretariat

APRC@fao.org

*Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Fiji, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to address the Thirty-fifth session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) regarding the outcome of the Thirty-fourth Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held at Denarau in Nadi, Fiji, from 9 to 13 April 2018.
2. I take this opportunity to thank the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this virtual meeting of the Thirty-fifth session of APRC and its initial willingness to have hosted the meeting in Bhutan.
3. I need hardly add that we are meeting not in the beautiful country of Bhutan but through the medium of the internet because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. This is an extraordinary time in the world. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had serious deleterious effects on the agricultural sector. It has disrupted food systems, including food production, movement of agricultural labour, domestic and international trade as well as food

<sup>1</sup> Rescheduled from 17-20 February 2020, Thimphu, Bhutan

consumption habits and food security. It is in this climate that the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to combat hunger has greater importance than ever before in our lifetime. FAO must now support Members to take proactive steps to mitigate the negative effects of the Coronavirus on the welfare and livelihoods of peoples, on national economies, labour, population mobility and global trade. It must help to protect the most vulnerable peoples and strive to lift the impoverished out of poverty and hunger. I sincerely hope and pray that we will find the necessary tools to overcome this crisis and restore health to all peoples.

5. I would like now to turn to the Thirty-fourth session of APRC and give you a recap of the highlights and the most significant decisions of that meeting, which has informed the work of FAO.

6. As you know, Fiji had the honour of hosting the Thirty-fourth session of APRC in Nadi two years ago. The Senior Officers session was chaired by the then Permanent Secretary for Agriculture of the Government of the Republic of Fiji, Mr David Kolutagane. The Ministerial Segment was chaired by my predecessor, the Honourable Inia B. Seruiratu, who was then Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management and Meteorological Services of the Republic of Fiji.

7. The Regional Conference was attended by representatives of 35 Members. Observers attended from one non-Member, 14 international non-governmental organizations and four intergovernmental organizations. Representatives of five other UN organizations also participated. The Final Report, document APRC/18/REP, includes a summary of the main recommendations “requiring the attention of the Council” and another, “requiring the attention of the Conference”.

8. The Thirty-fourth session of the APRC considered several regional and global policy and regulatory issues such as the state of food and agriculture in the region; revitalizing the rural economy through enhanced linkages between small-scale agricultural production and value chains; promoting national nutrition policies and investments, and integrating nutrition objectives into food and agricultural policy, programme design and implementation; and Blue Growth.

9. Following the deliberations on these issues, the Regional Conference highlighted challenges related to the adverse effects of climate change, frequent natural disasters, environmental degradation, increasing demands on land and water resources, changing demographics affecting the agriculture sector, and animal and plant pests and diseases. It recognized the important roles of smallholders, family farmers and fishers in contributing to food security and nutrition and called for efforts to enhance the capacity to more effectively link with modern value chains. It recommended that FAO assist countries in strengthening sector-specific contributions under the 2030 Agenda and in enhancing systems for monitoring and reporting sector activities. FAO was urged to continue to support countries in integrating agriculture into their national policies, strategies and programmes for climate change and disaster risk reduction and management.

10. The APRC emphasized capacity building, research and development, technology transfer, robust data collection and analysis, sound agricultural policies and strategies, infrastructure development and increased investment in the agriculture sector as key needs. It stressed the need to increase sustainable agricultural production and productivity, reduce food loss and waste, and facilitate transparent, open and efficient trade of food to accelerate progress towards food security and nutrition in the region. Food safety issues were noted and the Regional Conference recommended that FAO integrate and mainstream food safety and nutrition in agriculture and food systems work. It recommended that FAO strengthen tripartite collaboration between the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and FAO. In order to reinforce capacities of countries, FAO was requested to provide guidance and capacity development for the design and modernization of food safety regulatory and control frameworks and indicators in the region. In a larger sense, FAO was asked to encourage a milieu for research and innovation that empowers industry, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)

and smallholders to incorporate best international practices and voluntary standards as well as securing food safety certification for improved market access.

11. The Regional Conference underlined the need for continuity in the strategic direction of the Organization and appreciated the alignment between FAO's Strategic Objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in guiding future actions in agriculture, food security and nutrition, and welcomed alignment of FAO's Strategic Objectives with the SDGs.

12. The Regional Conference highlighted the importance of mobilizing investment and strengthening collaboration with partner organizations at global, regional and national levels, including with research institutions, multilateral development institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector and other regional and international organizations. The Regional Conference emphasized the value of regional sharing of knowledge, experiences and expertise, including through South-South cooperation.

13. The meeting also noted issues relating to decentralization and the prioritization of country and regional needs, recognizing the need to update the coverage of FAO offices in order to adapt to current developments and requirements. It appreciated steps taken to decentralize roles, responsibilities, delegations of authorities and resources and urged FAO to continue such decentralization efforts, whilst improving the technical capacity of the Organization.

14. The conference reviewed and endorsed the draft Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2016-2019 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

15. The conference welcomed the joint communiqué of the First Joint FAO and SPC Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry held in Port Vila, Vanuatu in October 2017. The Regional Conference recommended that FAO provide technical assistance to develop specific solutions customized to the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Regional Conference emphasized the importance and efficacy of partnerships to effectively implement actions for food security and to deliver coordinated multisectoral actions through a sustainable food systems approach for healthy diets.

16. The Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) updated the Regional Conference on the main outcomes of the CFS since the previous APRC in 2016 and the relevance of this work to the FAO Regional Conference. In particular, the Chairperson noted the critical role of women's empowerment, rural-urban dynamics, including the challenges of urbanization and rural transformation, responsible investments in agriculture and governance of land tenure, among many other areas, as well as delivering policy recommendations on sustainable livestock and forests and connecting smallholders to markets.

17. We are pleased that the Senior Officers Meeting earlier this week substantively discussed progress made on FAO's priorities in the region during 2018-2019 and the priorities for the current biennium. We have noted that FAO now proposes an improved approach to their implementation in the Asia and the Pacific region during the 2020-2021 biennium, with four enhanced Regional Initiatives, and the introduction of 14 programmatic areas of focus to ensure the delivery of tangible and measurable results for greater impact. These priorities for FAO's work are very important and we hope they will build on the earlier achievements and enhance FAO's contributions to agricultural and rural development and food security in the Asia and the Pacific region.

18. I thank you for your kind attention and express my full confidence that this Regional Conference will meet its objectives and provide sound policy guidance to FAO.

*Vinaka Vakalevu.*