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STATEMENT BY THE FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

at the UNFCCC COP 15 side event

Climate Change and Food Security:

Unifying commitment and action in land-based sectors

Copenhagen, 10th December 2009, 13.00-14.30; Room Victor Borg

Madame Chair

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and gentlemen

We have now one billion hungry people in the world: one in every six human beings. We will go from the present population of 6.7 billion to 9.1 billion by 2050. This will require an increase of food production of 70% at world level and 100% in developing countries. We need to spend 17% of ODA (44 billion US dollars) a year to change this situation, with investment in smallholder agriculture of least developing countries. This should be possible in a world where we spend 1340 billion US dollars a year for armaments.

Climate change and agriculture to be addressed urgently and simultaneously

Food security and climate change challenges will have to be addressed simultaneously and urgently in a holistic and coherent manner. In this way, we can achieve the adaptation that is crucial for food security, while making a significant mitigation contribution to avoid catastrophic climate change. Short-term and long-term action is needed.

International Commitments can encourage better integrated action

Article 2 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change states that its ultimate objective is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level which would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. This level is to be achieved within a timeframe that should *“allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, ensure that food production is not threatened and enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”*

Parameters for assessing climate change mitigation should thus include food security and economic development contributions. FAO has made submissions and held side events in Bali, December 2008, Bonn, April and August 2009, Barcelona, November 2009. They concluded that these parameters should come together and be pursued simultaneously within agriculture.

The Declaration of the World Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security, held from 16 to 18 November 2009 in Rome, recognized the severe risks that climate change poses to food security and the agriculture sector. The Summit also underlined the need to proactively face these challenges through adaptation and mitigation, with particular attention to small-scale producers and vulnerable populations.

Translating these commitments into concrete action is now part of the task we face and agriculture offers a number of opportunities for action that we cannot afford to miss.

Agriculture and forestry account for 31% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture is responsible for 14% and forestry for 17%. But they can reduce emissions by at least 80%. This potential arises for 90% from sink enhancement and for 10% from emission reductions.

Improved cropland and grassland management, as well as restoration of degraded land, capture and store carbon in agricultural soils. They increase organic matter in soils, which in turn leads to greater yields, resilience and carbon sequestration.

These technologies, with multiples benefits, are already available. They are cost-effective, compatible with development priorities and could be implemented over the short-term. However, lack of capital and start-up resources, low access to inputs and extension services, poor rural infrastructure and risk aversion will need to be addressed through incentives and financing, information and capacity building for farmers.

Initiatives for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), including UN-REDD where FAO works with UNDP and UNEP, are making progress in enabling forestry to contribute to climate change mitigation. Greater efforts are now needed for agriculture, so that it can play a similar role.

Financing for agriculture can offer significant returns

Unfortunately, soil carbon sequestration in agriculture has been largely excluded from the main climate change financing mechanisms, although incentives that reward agricultural practices with multiple benefits could help vulnerable countries to respond more comprehensively and sustainably to the dual challenge of climate change and food security.

Innovative ways of sourcing and delivering funding, particularly to smallholders, require further development and field testing. Funding from both public and private sources should be increased and public-private partnerships need to be forged.

A phased approach enhancing national capabilities for developing systems of measurement, reporting and verification will be important to better link international support to country action.

Moving towards a landscape approach across different land uses can allow for more optimal management of the synergies and trade-offs involved

Agriculture can be a major driver of deforestation. Carbon sequestration from forests may therefore ultimately depend on the ability of agriculture to provide adequate food supplies and income from land already under cultivation. Also increased biofuel production can result in growing competition for land and water resources. An approach that looks across the various land-based sectors and strengthens land-use planning, can enable better management by countries of these trade-offs, while also widening opportunities to exploit synergies.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is urgent that international support is mobilized to enable countries to clarify choices and their consequences. We need to create confidence and build capacity to formulate and implement food security and sustainable agricultural development strategies that are nationally-owned and integrate climate as well as food security objectives. FAO has already launched several initiatives and is ready to join with partners in supporting countries to this end. In this context, the Government of Finland has just made a commitment to provide FAO with a generous financial support of 3.8 million USD for 2010-2011. In this regard, I

would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Finland, while encouraging other partners to join in this effort.

In closing, I would like to highlight that during COP 15 an Agriculture Day will be organized on 12 December, a Forest Day on 13 December, and an IFAP side event, on 14 December

I wish to thank the Danish Ministry and IFAD, whose collaboration was essential for the success of this side event.

Many thanks for your kind attention.