



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

**38th (Special) Session**

**Rome (Italy), 11 May 2012**

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO**

Ambassador Yaya Olaniran, Chair of the Committee on World of Food Security. Thank you for inviting me to this session. If you do not mind, Mr Ambassador, I will be speaking in Spanish today.

Mr Carlos Sere, representing the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD),

Mr Amir Abdulla, representing the World Food Programme (WFP),

Mr Kostas Stamoulis, Secretary of the Committee on World Food Security,

Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a few minutes, the Committee on World Food Security will consider for approval the Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security.

Ensuring that the poor and vulnerable have secure and equitable rights to land and other natural resources is the key to fighting hunger and poverty. It is a historic milestone for countries to have reached the first ever global agreement on land tenure guidelines.

Another first has been to discuss the issue of land from a governance perspective, rather than the demands of social movements.

We now have a shared vision. This is a starting point that will help to improve the lives of those living in hunger and poverty the world over.

Responsible governance is also necessary for the proper management and preservation of natural resources, which are key to achieving the sustainable development we seek and that we will be discussing at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in a few weeks' time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The origin of today's victory can be traced back to the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), held by FAO in Brazil in March 2006. It was the first time in 30 years that the international community had met to debate these issues.

One of the important decisions taken at ICARRD was to support a “participatory approach based on economic, social and cultural rights as well as good governance for the equitable management of land, water, forests and other natural resources within the context of national legal frameworks, focusing on sustainable development and overcoming inequalities in order to eradicate hunger and poverty.”

The voluntary guidelines and the agreement you have reached comply with this decision.

The dialogue that ended with consensus on voluntary guidelines has been frank and constructive and succeeded in bringing closer positions on very sensitive issues, involving governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

The process began in 2009 when FAO instigated consultations in various parts of the globe, with the participation of 1 000 people from 130 countries. Immediately thereafter, the process moved to the Committee on World Food Security, which led negotiations involving nearly 100 countries, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders.

I wish to congratulate every one of you on this achievement, which also strengthens the role of the Committee on World Food Security – the most inclusive and important international and intergovernmental platform for food and nutritional security in existence today.

Although the guidelines are voluntary, they demonstrate your intention to apply them to your respective national contexts. Each of us has a role to play in this stage, which entails involving new stakeholders, including at local level.

FAO shares your commitment to the voluntary guidelines. This means that we are ready, at the request of member countries, to facilitate national dialogue, build capacity, help design and implement policies, and contribute in other ways to full implementation of the guidelines.

To this end, I have asked my directors to identify all areas and means by which FAO can contribute to implementing the voluntary guidelines.

FAO will also use the guidelines as a basis for partnerships with the private sector and other nongovernmental actors. It is very important, at this juncture, for everyone to espouse the voluntary guidelines.

Although implementation of the voluntary guidelines is now moving to countries, we have already identified the next global challenge: agreeing on principles for responsible agricultural investment. It is a thorny issue but the consensus achieved with the voluntary guidelines shows that it can be done.

The Committee on World Food Security has proved its ability to conduct complex, high-level negotiations, providing a forum where different voices and opinions can be heard and a satisfactory agreement reached. I invite the Committee to take up this new challenge with the same energy.

Thank you very much.