

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

CRD6

October 2016

E

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

*30th Session, 3 – 7 October 2016
Astana, Kazakhstan*

OPENING SPEECH OF CHAIR CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Speech by Mrs Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Chairperson Codex Alimentarius Commission

Distinguished Chairman of the CCEURO session, Regional Coordinator for CCEURO Dr Martijn Weijters
Honourable Minister of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Kuandyk Bishinbaev
Honourable Vice-Minister of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Timur Zhaxylyukov
Your Excellency the Ambassador of the Netherlands in Kazakhstan, Mr Dirk Jan Kop
Distinguished Co-chair of the CCEURO Session, Mr. Zhandarbek Bekshin
Distinguished Representatives of the FAO Mr Branko Bulatovic and of WHO Mrs Melita Vujnovic
Distinguished Representatives of the Codex Secretariat
Distinguished Delegates attending the 30th session of the CCEURO
Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great privilege and honour for me to attend this 30th session of CCEURO which is taking place in Astana (Kazakhstan) this week and I would like to congratulate both The Netherlands and Kazakhstan on their decision to organise the 30th session of the CCEURO in Astana and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our Host country Kazakhstan for the very warm welcome that has been extended to us and for their kind hospitality.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Kazakhstan on their accession to the status of WTO Member on 30th November 2015, becoming the 162nd WTO Member. There is no doubt that the Kazakh authorities had to put in a lot of work and effort in order to accomplish this important objective and to comply with all the WTO accession requirements including in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. I wish the Government of Kazakhstan continued success in all its endeavours.

I would also like to thank the Government of The Netherlands and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of The Netherlands as well as the Government of our Host country Kazakhstan together with the Committee on

Consumer Protection of the Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for their tireless efforts and hard work and for having ensured that the stage was set for a very successful CCEURO session.

Ensuring inclusiveness, transparency and collaboration are important core values of Codex. Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Netherlands for their consistent efforts to promote inclusiveness, transparency and collaboration within the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Indeed, The Netherlands have spearheaded the co-hosting initiative in Codex in a very consistent and exemplary manner for the past twenty-three years (23) and right across the board of all the Codex Committees that they have hosted (*Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods, the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues and the CCEURO*). In fact, the following list of countries with whom The Netherlands have co-hosted Codex Committees says it all: Cuba, 1993; Philippines, 1996; China, 2000; Tanzania, 2003; India, 2004; Brazil, 2006; China, 2007; Turkey, 2010; Russian Federation, 2013; India, 2015; Kazakhstan, 2016.

As Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, I would like to thank the Government of The Netherlands for proactively bringing Codex to all parts of the world. I would also like to congratulate The Netherlands for having organised a CCEURO session in Central Asia for the very first time in Codex history. As eloquently stated by the Regional Coordinator Dr Martijn Weijters in the Letter that he addressed to CCEURO Members: *“the European Region of the Codex Alimentarius Commission stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to Central Asia and the Pacific.”*

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, when I took up my leadership position as Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2014, the Codex Alimentarius Commission had 186 Members. Two years later today, this number has increased to 188 Codex Members with the latest country to have joined Codex this year being a CCEURO Member San Marino.

The CAC is indeed a truly global and international organisation which represents more than 99% of the world's consumers. However, it is not only about numbers. We must ensure the effective participation of all Codex Members in Codex work, especially those from developing countries. We must also strive to ensure that the national Codex structures in developing countries are strengthened.

The CCEURO Region is an extremely diverse and heterogeneous region with 51 Member Countries and One Member Organisation: the European Union. I noted that nine (9) CCEURO Region Member Countries are listed in the table of the countries eligible for support from the new Codex Trust Fund (CTF2). These are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. I would therefore like to encourage the eligible countries to make full use of the CTF2 in order to strengthen Codex in their countries by implementing either individual or group projects.

Promoting inter-regional and intra-regional collaboration and cooperation have been very high on my Agenda as Chairperson of the CAC. Indeed, I am convinced that we have a lot more in common than our perceived

differences. Above all, through dialogue and exchange, there is an opportunity to learn from each other and identify food safety best practices together. It is in this spirit that I have taken each opportunity to organise informal meetings of the Regional Coordinators in order to build bridges and enhance the dialogue and communication amongst Codex Regions and Members.

I have also encouraged countries within specific regions to enhance Intra-regional collaboration and coordination on Codex issues. Two weeks ago, I attended the session of the Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP) which took place in Port Vila, Vanuatu (South-West Pacific). I noted with great satisfaction, that Papua New Guinea, a Pacific Island Country (PIC), had offered to support Delegations from four PICs to attend that CCNASWP session as part of their south-south cooperation arrangement and equally to promote intra-regional collaboration to strengthen Codex and food safety in their Region. I wholeheartedly applaud the Papua New Guinea's initiative and I sincerely hope that their example of Intra-regional support and collaboration will inspire other Codex Members and serve as a model of mutual support in order to promote Codex and food safety.

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, there is an African Proverb which says that "If you want to go far, go together." The wisdom in this African proverb encapsulates what our engagement in Codex is about. We must work together to reach even greater heights. It is in this spirit that the CCEURO Regional Coordinator is inviting Members of CCEURO to make the best of this CCEURO session to *"get to know each other better, to bridge the gaps and to strengthen collaboration between the various countries in the Region."*

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, while we have made good progress in Codex over the past fifty (50) years, I am convinced that there is still more work to be done. As Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, I have made it a top priority to advocate for food safety among all 188 Codex Members and over 200 Observer Organisations. Almost every week, I engage in activities in all parts of the world to raise awareness about the importance of food safety amongst decision makers, competent authorities and all relevant stakeholders along the food chain from primary production to consumers. Yet, I realise that there is still more to be done. I am convinced that we need to raise the profile of food safety worldwide.

It is with this conviction that I called for the establishment of a World Food Safety Day on the occasion of the Symposium which took place in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) in December 2015 following the publication of the first ever WHO data on the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases. It is urgent, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, to take appropriate actions and measures in order to reduce the burden of foodborne disease and improve the food safety situation worldwide.

My appeal received a lot of support world-wide. Following the intervention by the Distinguished Delegation of Costa Rica at the 39th session of the Commission last July, the Commission welcomed and supported the proposal to establish the World Food Safety Day on a permanent basis while noting that the establishment of such a day would require the proposal by Codex Members for the decision of the FAO Conference and the World Health Assembly as well as a decision at UN Headquarter level, with an estimated time-frame of three

years.

According to the famous Chinese proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Congratulations, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have started the journey! Let us remain focussed and keep up the momentum so that we can achieve this noble goal. We owe this to consumers from all parts of the world.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, in September 2015, world leaders adopted a set of seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet and to ensure prosperity for all. I am convinced that our concerted multisectoral efforts to ensure food safety and quality will positively impact the UN Sustainable Development Goals through wealth creation and the subsequent poverty reduction, improved public health and consumer protection as well as better food security, economic growth and prosperity, to mention but a few.

I will conclude my remarks by thanking you Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen for your commitment to Codex food safety and quality work. I value your efforts to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Let us continue our efforts to ensure that food safety and quality are high on the political agendas of CCEURO Members.

I wish you a very successful CCEURO session. Thank you for your attention!