

Hon Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Hon Regional Commissioner for Arusha, FAO representative, Mr Chairperson, Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Good Afternoon

It gives me great pleasure to bring you greetings from the World Health Organization. This workshop which highlights the importance of fruits and vegetables comes one week after the Heads of Government met in New York at the High Level Meeting of the UN to discuss how to combat non communicable diseases. One of the important statements in the Political Declaration of the Meeting was the importance of multisectoral public policies and the importance of providing greater opportunities for utilization of healthy local agricultural products and foods.

WHO has always promoted this philosophy and in 2003 a WHO/FAO expert consultation on diet, nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases showed convincing evidence that fruits and vegetables decreased the risk of obesity and diabetes and lowered the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

But not only that, we know that fruits and vegetables are essential sources of micronutrients in the diet and these are not only important for the prevention of NCDs but among others also form part of the care for persons living with communicable diseases such as TB, HIV and AIDS, they are essential

components for the healthy growth of our infants and children and are important contributors to a healthy aging process.

Since then and in partnership with FAO we have worked to make fruit and vegetables available, accessible, affordable and acceptable to all, through the framework that was developed in the 2004 Kobe Meeting.

In this WHO region, together with FAO, we have conducted workshops and initiatives for the Francophone countries and the Lucephone countries and now today we start the initiative in the Anglophone countries.

This is a strong collaboration between FAO and WHO and we have here a range of technical experts and policy makers from health, education and agriculture as we believe that the problem of low consumption of fruits and vegetables cannot be tackled by one sector alone. Together we can make the changes that are necessary to create an enabling environment to allow our citizens to make the healthy choice and live a healthier life.

Honorable Minister I thank you on behalf of WHO and the assembled delegates for the kind hospitality that Tanzania and specifically Arusha is offering us and we hope that the work of this workshop will be of benefit to all living in this continent. Thank You.