

Opening remarks delivered by the Permanent Representative of Italy, Ambassador Mariangela Zappia, in her capacity as Chair of the Group of Friends on Food Security and Nutrition during the briefing on “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” and “The State of Food and Agriculture”.

(6 November 2018)

Madam President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization,
Mr. President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development,
Mr. Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP),
Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues,

- I am honored to intervene at this briefing on “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” and “The State of Food and Agriculture” and to be part of such a high-level panel.
- I am here as current **Chair of the Group of Friends on Food Security and Nutrition**, a wide, informal and cross-regional constituency of UN Member States, which advocate for constant and active commitment - at national, regional and global level - in pursuing SDG2 and its related targets.
- Let me also recall - not without proud - that Italy is the **host country of FAO, IFAD and WFP, which together constitute the agro-food Pole of the United Nations system**. This symbolizes the particular attention that Italy has traditionally devoted to food and security issues, as mainstreamed in our foreign policy and reflected in our national contribution to important UN activities, from humanitarian intervention to sustainable development cooperation.

- As already highlighted by the President of the General Assembly, the two reports that will be discussed today show **some worrying signals**, which should alert the international community and induce it to renew and strengthen its commitment.
- The most concerning message is that **hunger - after years of decline - is again on the rise**. The absolute number of undernourished people increased to nearly **821 million in 2017** - or **one in nine** people - from around 804 million in 2016. A set back to levels of almost a decade ago. The increase in the number of undernourished people **seems to affect particularly Africa** - where it adds up to other structural factors undermining sustainable development - as well as **South America**. **Malnutrition** seems to be more cross-regional, contributing to overweight and obesity also in other regions of the world, including several high income countries. **Healthy diets and healthy lifestyles are the key**.
- The other key message stemming from the report on the State of Food and Agriculture is that **rural migration has reached problematic levels**, with a consequent impact on land management and agricultural production capacity and increasing urbanization pressure on already overpopulated cities. There is a need, therefore, to devise policies that can forge a better and more synergetic relationship between rural and urban areas.
- I am not going more in detail into the contents of the two reports, as I do not want to spoil the presentations by our high-level speakers. Nor do I wish to prejudge the subsequent interactive discussion. Let me just make **a few remarks about the general approach to food security and nutrition issues**.
- First, the reports of the UN Rome-based Agencies confirm the **strong nexus between conflicts, food insecurity, climate change and migration**. In many cases, crisis situations and open conflicts are the

primary culprits behind food insecurity. More and more often land cultivation and agricultural production are undermined by extreme climate events, triggered by global warming. In most cases, these disruptive scenarios force rural people to leave their homes, generating internal displacement or external migration flows.

- This shows that food insecurity and undernutrition cannot be tackled in isolation, but are to be inscribed in a **comprehensive and integrated approach** that takes into account all relevant challenges, as well as their growing interrelation. In other words, fighting hunger implies also promoting peace and stability, tackling climate change and sustaining rural development. Integration between these pillars is also the *leit motif* of the reforms launched at the UN, notably with regard to sustaining peace and promoting sustainable development. We are therefore on the right track, but we need to proceed along this path with greater urgency and determination.
- Second, **humanitarian aid and sustainable development cooperation must go increasingly hand-in-hand**, the former being the necessary response to the emergency phase and the latter representing the instrument to increase resilience, especially in post-conflict or post-disaster situations, and to generate tangible long-term dividends. Complementarity - in addition to integration - must be therefore the second feature of our policies in support of food security and nutrition. We look forward to the **implementation of UN Development System reform** - particularly to the role of the new Resident Coordinators - to make sure that this combined and integrated approach be effectively adopted on the field.
- Third, food insecurity and malnutrition are global challenges and must be addressed globally, that is in all regions of the world. It is a fact, however, that certain continents, particularly Africa, and certain regions, **particularly sub-Saharan Africa where most LCDs are located**, are the most affected and should receive, therefore, the greatest attention and the most urgent support by the international

community. This is why last year, during its Presidency of the G7, Italy focused on increasing the G7 collective support for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa through an array of actions, such as increasing Official Development Assistance, better targeting and measuring existing interventions and mobilizing responsible private investments and public-private partnerships. Africa is also the continent where the above-mentioned interrelation between peace and security, climate change and food security is most evident and where the complementarity between humanitarian intervention and sustainable development is mostly needed.

- I would like to conclude by thanking the leaders of FAO, IFAD and WFP for coming to New York and present their reports to the UN membership. We are grateful to you for providing us with the information and stimulus we need to better orient our action in favor of food security and nutrition. And - last, but not least - we thank you for the efforts that your agencies deploy every day in the global fight against hunger and malnutrition.