



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

WELCOME SPEECH

by

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delivered at the

WORLD WATER DAY 2012 CELEBRATION

UN Conference Centre, Bangkok
22 March 2012

Mr Shunichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCAP

Dr Michael Yates, Mission Director, USAID

**Mr Phoovanet Thongrunroj, Chief Engineer, Royal Irrigation Department,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Honourable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to welcome you at the World Water Day 2012 jointly organized with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. I am also very pleased that the United States of America have agreed to join us for this event.

This year's event is dedicated to the theme of "water and food security". FAO therefore has the privilege to organize the World Water Day campaign world-wide and for this region, jointly with ESCAP, on behalf of the 27 UN Agencies and programmes that work together under "UN-Water". The theme of *Water and Food Security* is central to our mandate as a UN Organization. Land and water are the two lead inputs for food production.

Until recently, the food availability has been improved and the low food prices have helped to improve access to food particularly for the poor. Indeed, the green revolution resulted in the production increase of cereals in Asia by 3 times in past 40 years since 1960th and cereal prices in real term declined by 40 percent during the same period, which helped to halve the proportion of extreme hunger in the region from 34 percent in 1970 to 17 percent in 2005. Up to today, we have managed to match rising demand with supply. On the other hand, our successes have been met, in some cases, with excesses of food intake resulted in one billion people suffering from overweight and non-communicable diseases (almost equal numbers who suffer from hunger), pollution, and wastage of water, energy and food.

It appears, however, wake up calls occurred at the time of food price crisis of 2007-08 clearly indicated that the era of cheap food was over. With food prices continue to increase and stand now twice as high as a decade ago, eradicating nearly 600 million people suffering from hunger and under nutrition in the Asia-Pacific region became more complex and difficult.

In addition to this existing challenge, the demand for food will rapidly increase in the future as a global population expected to rise above 9 Billion in less than 40 years ,out of which 5 billion people will be in Asia and the Pacific region. To feed the projected world population, food production will have to increase by 60 percent globally, and by 77 percent in developing countries by the year 2050, which has to be achieved from the arable land with a very little potential for future expansion and from water which is becoming increasingly scarce.

Rapid urbanization, rising and volatile food prices, climate change impacts, frequent natural disasters, trade policies, increased water demand from different sectors and energy demand, soaring crude oil prices and the growing use of food crops for bio-fuels are some of critical factors complicating our efforts fight against hunger. Greater interconnectedness between the water cycle, aquatic ecosystems and users is increasing with unchecked mobilization of water resources and resulting basin closures makes decision-making increasingly complex.

As indicated in our recent publication on *The state of the world's land and water resources for food and agriculture*, our planet and our region's natural resources are becoming scarce and their capacity to deliver a set of social, economic and environmental services is becoming severely degraded. Indeed, food and water are both identified as critical issues for Rio + 20.

We need to address the overall challenge of human demand outstripping the capacity of our natural systems; and we need to find solutions. This is why we are joining ESCAP and other partners towards green growth in the region. What is clear is that the demand for food is not negotiable. But it is also clear that we will not solve the problems of our water resources if we don't address water for food. Agriculture consumes 70 percent of all water use and up to 90% in some countries in the region. Indeed, water holds the key for food security and our life for today and in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I trust that this event today "World Water Day" will be a stepping stone in this endeavor. Water, as available in everywhere, we often forget its importance in our daily life.

Let's remember and reaffirm the importance of water for our food security, life, peace, stability and sustainable development.

Let's advocate a need to find a solution to cope with anticipated future water shortage, and Let's work together as a partner for our future generations to come.

I wish us all a very fruitful World Water Day 2012 celebration.