

## Statement by the President of the Republic of Suriname

**Drs. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan**

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*Mr. Chairman, (Madam Chairwoman)*

*Distinguished Heads of Government,*

*Honourable Director-General of the FAO, Dr. Jaques Diouf,*

*Honourable Ministers,*

*Excellenties,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In September 2000, the leaders of the world met at the United Nations Headquarters and pledged, through endorsement of the Millennium Development Goals, to reduce hunger with 50% by 2015 (MDG 1), and to integrate the principles of sustainable investment into country policies and programmes to reverse loss of environmental resources (MDG 7). We are not succeeding. On the one hand we experience record harvests of cereals, and on the other hand the number of people suffering from hunger is increasing.

We, world leaders, have the moral responsibility to lead, and to provide the solutions to achieve food security for all, in each country on the globe. In the short term, effective measures are called for to secure food supply and food accessibility, in order to reduce the vulnerability of families in poor urban and rural communities. Structural solutions for sustained food security for the medium and long term must be found by allocating adequate funds, capacity building, research and development, policy coordination, the creation of sustainable jobs, and establishing effective partnerships. It is imperative that we embed these actions in policy frameworks that will preserve our environment and utilize our natural resources in a sustainable manner.

There is a need for country-specific policies and strategies, while synchronized, well-orchestrated international measures are required to establish an environment conducive to prosperous agricultural development, particularly in developing countries.

In Suriname, the agricultural policies and strategies are outlined in the 2004 Agricultural Sector Plan, which comprises twelve key policy

interventions, whose main objective is to achieve food security. These interventions include investments in the rehabilitation of infrastructure in rural areas; the establishment of water users' boards; the construction of dykes to protect land against rising sea levels; credit facilities to farmers at reasonable conditions; the issuing of land titles to farmers; the introduction of new production techniques; the provision of inputs and extension services to farmers. At the same time, we are also taking measures to improve food safety and train farmers in the establishment and management of agri-businesses. And as part of safety net measures, a school feeding programme is implemented in poor areas.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to these interventions, there is also a strong emphasis on the growing involvement of women of the interior, rural and other areas, in agricultural matters, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and a national microcredit fund, all aimed at enhancing food security. Our efforts to improve food security in Suriname are bearing fruit, as demonstrated by the increased contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP in the year 2008.

Aware of the challenges and severe impact of climate change on the agricultural sector, food security and the livelihoods of people living in our low-lying coastal areas, my Government is committed to avoiding carbon emissions through forest conservation financing mechanisms, pursuing greener economy and adaptation measures, which we refer to as the “Suriname Green” development strategy. In this regard, Suriname will build on the existing Multi-Annual Development Plan for 2006-2011 and on our rapid response to evolving the REDD (*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation*) Framework for trade in carbon credits.

But while there is certainly a need for country-specific strategies on the short and longer term, international measures are also urgently needed to create a supportive environment for prosperous agricultural development, in particular in developing countries, since there are many problems that are beyond the scope of any one country. It is our experience that, however successful national efforts may be to improve the conditions for more efficient agricultural production, dependency on international markets and the hurdles of the global trade structure remain major problems which have an impact on agricultural produce;

they restrict the outlook for all farmers. There is, therefore, a need for a comprehensive and globally coordinated response to improve the effectiveness of good initiatives and to secure sustainability. Within this context, it is of utmost importance to follow up on the UN Secretary General's 'Task Force on Global Food Security'. Commitments to restore and increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) must be fulfilled as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The children of the world are hardest hit by decreasing food security. When hunger strikes, they are the ones whose health suffers most; their very future is at stake. When it comes to food security and eradication of hunger, the actions of our respective governments and of multilateral organizations should not primarily be driven by markets and economics in the first place, but they should also be guided by human needs, a sense of responsibility and good morals. Our utmost duty is to improve the lives of every human being on planet earth.

Technical and institutional strategies at national, regional and international levels are indispensable to find the solutions through which

we can improve food security and decrease the numbers of people suffering from hunger. In this regard, I propose that the international community undertakes coordinated actions, so that abandoned or underutilized agricultural land can be taken into production in an efficient and profitable way.

Large areas on several continents are affected by severe drought and desertification, other areas experience an excess of water. In both normal economic and social life are seriously hampered. I propose to find solutions to take water from surplus areas to areas with serious water deficits. These solutions may benefit the people in both situations.

I furthermore propose that applied research is accelerated, in developing new agricultural techniques and products, adapted to the changing climate conditions, in order to strengthen food security in the future.

In the fight against hunger we need commitments and timely actions, to establish a global trading environment that supports the poor in their efforts to produce their own food, and to sustainably improve the development outlook for the millions of people in the developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Suriname is endowed with abundant renewable natural resources - over ninety percent of the country is covered with forest, we have very fertile soils and enormous volumes of fresh water - and we have good knowledge of and experience with agriculture. Against this background, my country is in an extraordinary position to play a significant role in fostering food security and eradicating hunger, if we can avail ourselves of the required technical and financial support.

Mr. Chairman,

I call upon all, developed and developing countries, public and private sectors, men and women, old and young, to work in partnership to achieve what we have pledged. I call upon organisations like the WTO, UNCTAD, FAO, IMF and the World bank, where necessary, to adjust their focus and operations, to focus on achieving this objective of food security and poverty eradication, and to make hunger and poverty history.