

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND,
DR B. S. DLAMINI DURING THE WORLD SUMMIT ON FOOD
SECURITY HELD IN ROME ITALY: 16 – 18 NOVEMBER, 2009**

Chairperson

Heads of States and Governments

Secretary-general of the United Nations

Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great privilege and honour to make this statement on behalf of His Majesty King Mswati III and Ingwenyama of the Kingdom of Swaziland who is unable to attend due to equally important national duties. I wish to convey His greetings and best wishes to all Heads of State and delegations here present and reiterate the importance Swaziland attaches to this Summit.

Your Excellencies, this Summit is being held at a critical time when the world is faced with a number of challenges which include the global financial and economic crises plus the need to reduce world hunger and eradicate poverty, in particular rural poverty. Faced with such immense challenges it thus seems that the target of reducing by half the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in 2015, as agreed in the 1996 World Food Summit, and in line with Millennium Development Goal number one, seems illusive.

Excellencies, the statistics before us are overwhelming and just impossible to ignore. One billion people without anything to eat on a daily basis is inexcusable. These are truly frightening statistics which must drive us to an urgent and united agenda of action. And there is a further dimension to this problem. The existing numbers are not only a challenge, but there is a significant degree of insecurity attached to them. For many countries whose populations are devastated by hunger and malnutrition, there remains uncertainty regarding food security.

Excellencies, climate change also negatively impacts on food security. Natural disasters such as severe droughts and floods in different parts of the world have created huge numbers of hungry persons. Under such circumstances it is very difficult for the affected populations including the rural poor to produce their own food. If there is a recurrence of such disasters then de-motivation sets in as people get reluctant to engage in farming activities.

Excellencies, a consensus is what is required among Member Nations and international cooperating partners to effectively address the problem and this forum provides a perfect platform for this. I believe increased investment in agriculture is an important solution.

Excellencies in the Kingdom of Swaziland, about 70% of our population lives in the rural areas, and are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. They are also vulnerable to external shocks. Achieving national food security is a fundamental objective to attain.

Government is prioritizing the development of agriculture and currently it has allocated more than nine percent of the national budget to this sector. We are placing renewed emphasis on irrigation development by, among others, constructing dams countrywide. Furthermore, a Farm Input Support Program has been developed for implementation. In this regard we invite our international cooperating partners to assist us implement this program.

In June 2008, a High-Level Conference on food security was held at this venue. Like in many other fora, we duly committed ourselves to supporting one another through pledges to be honoured on the basis of our economic status and technological abilities. International cooperating partners should now fully commit themselves to address world food security problems in line with the resolutions they have made. We are banking on the commitments made by leaders of the G8 countries in partnering with national governments to be honoured.

I thank you