

Check against delivery

Address by His Excellency

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Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa to

World Summit on Food Security, Rome, 16 November 2009

Chairperson, Prime Minister Berlusconi;
Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban ki Moon;
Your Excellencies Heads of States and Governments;
The Director-General of FAO, Dr. Diouf;
Heads of Delegations;
Excellencies;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen:

Firstly, allow me, ^{Chairperson,} ~~Chairperson,~~ to congratulate ^{the FAO on the} ~~you on your election to~~ facilitate ^{on} ~~the proceedings~~ of this important summit. We are participating here with a sincere hope that this gathering will mark a departure from the past by producing a clear programme of action with measurable targets and monitoring mechanisms to track progress.

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of food security and agriculture summits. At these gatherings, commitments were made even as recent as at the May 2008 Summit which happened against the backdrop of food, finance and fuel crises. There too commitments were made and a declaration adopted.

In spite of these summits, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) State of Food Insecurity in the World Report estimates that the number of hungry people has increased to unprecedented levels of 1 billion in 2009. The figure is expected to increase further should there be no decisive action to reverse the trend within the context of meeting the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) targets. It is even more obvious now that a radical solution is needed to alter the conditions of the majority in the world in light of the most

devastating global economic meltdown ever experienced since the Great Depression.

This summit comes in the wake of the recent G20 meeting where leaders made a commitment to, among others, promote employment through structural policies, work to address excessive commodity price volatility by improving the functioning and transparency of physical and financial markets and promoting a closer dialogue between producer and consumer countries. They further welcomed the swift implementation of the \$250bn trade finance initiative and reaffirmed a commitment to fight all forms of protectionism and to reach an ambitious and balanced conclusion to the Doha Development Round.

More importantly, this summit precedes the next round of WTO negotiations and the December Copenhagen meeting on climate change. Honourable ladies and gentlemen, agriculture and food production will be adversely affected by climate change with devastating effects on food security. Adaptation or mitigation will be costly but necessary for food security, poverty reduction and maintenance of the ecosystems.

As we look ahead to Copenhagen, we should be resolute in our commitment to create jobs, raise incomes and improve food security through a green economy (i.e. promote environmentally friendly production methods) without jeopardising any country's right to exploit their natural endowments.

There is indeed a proliferation of summits within and outside the UN system dealing with similar challenges of poverty, inequality and global economic imbalances. Is it not time to ask: who is connecting the dots, coordinating implementation and assessing the impact? In other ^{WTO} words, who is pulling together all these initiatives into one coherent response to the aforementioned challenges?

Excellencies,

Although there are some signs of recovery from the global economic crisis in certain sectors, it is important to emphasise that the majority of developing countries are far from recovery. In fact sustained negative growth rates together with historical imbalances continue to reproduce worse forms of human suffering.

As a result, we should caution against complacency and parochial solutions based on narrow vested interests. This crisis presents a unique opportunity to world leaders to honestly examine the existing global economic and financial systems and endeavour to reform these crises. In this context, **our leaders must give effect to their commitment to reform the international financial and economic institutions to properly reflect the interest of a sustainable and inclusive global economy. In fact many of the global leaders gathered here have already made this undertaking in many fora within the UN system and at G20 level.**

The volatility of agricultural commodity prices demands of us to move faster to conclude a truly developmental Doha Round that would lead to a real and substantial reduction in trade and production distortions. To this end, **we add our voice to the call for the speedy conclusion of the Doha Development Round negotiations. Conclusion of these negotiations must necessarily lead to a concrete and comprehensive response to the difficulties experienced by developing countries in accessing markets in the developed world and to protect the competitiveness of ^{farmers} famers from the developing world. For as long as we fail to conclude those negotiations, many of the plans of this summit and others will remain just that – plans.**

Furthermore, **we support the call for intensive investment in small rural based agriculture, strong support for women farmers and the restoration of livelihood of rural communities.** Under-investment is rooted in the economic policy measures which unfortunately encouraged developing countries to reduce or eliminate agricultural services extended to farmers such as credit extension and infrastructure support. This resulted in substantial decline in agricultural production.

Chairperson,

This gathering dare not fail! It must create conditions for eliminating hunger and food insecurity. Consequently, only an agreement on a set of practical measures that must address in a concise and comprehensive manner, the challenge of food insecurity and poverty eradication, will meet the expectations of the one billion starving people across the globe.

This is the essence of the urgent task facing this summit! And to equal this task we need **strong accountability, follow-up mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation and matching funding to implement our decisions.** The world cannot afford another summit in the face of increasing numbers of hungry people; let this summit help end hunger.

We are encouraged by efforts to develop a coherent, integrated, inclusive and participatory global governance system on food security. However, this should be anchored on the centrality of the United Nations in the multilateral system. **Therefore, we welcome all efforts to reform FAO to effectively respond to the global challenges of food insecurity amid plenty and wastage!**

Chairperson,

In Africa there is general consensus that agricultural reforms within the framework of Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) remains an effective means to achieve, among other things, **targeted investments in agricultural production, irrigation infrastructure, access to fertiliser and seeds, agro-processing and market development including extension services, general human resources and meaningful involvement of women.** To achieve CAADP objectives, a strong partnership with the international community is required.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its ~~o~~utmost appreciation to all public, private and multilateral institutions for relentless efforts to end global hunger. As I have mentioned, we are participating in this Summit with a sincere hope that it is different from its predecessors; different in that it will produce concrete actions to help eliminate the scourge of hunger.

Let us remind ourselves that in any struggle victory always goes to those with the clearest understanding of what the next step is.

I thank you.