



Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

World Summit on Food Security

Plenary Statement

by

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16 November 2009
FAO - Rome, Italy

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is indeed an honour for me to address this World Food Security Summit. First, on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development – one of the three Rome-based United Nations agencies fully devoted to agricultural development and food security – let me welcome you all to Rome.
2. It is not a coincidence that this important Summit is being held in Rome, as the eternal city is home to the FAO, WFP and IFAD. Rome is indeed the global hub for agricultural and rural development, the central piece to global food security.
3. Holding the Summit in Rome is a signal to the entire world of the importance you attach to food security issues. It is also a signal to the three Rome-based agencies that it is imperative to act quickly in view of the urgency of the matter and the intolerable cost of inaction, namely, rising hunger and malnutrition.

4. It is in this spirit that we welcome the reform of the Committee on Food Security. It provides a stronger and coherent framework, as well as a new impetus for all our efforts. As my friend Jacques Diouf indicated to you earlier, the three Rome-based agencies are committed to working together and to fully exploiting the complementarities and synergies of our three distinct but interrelated mandates.

5. We have taken action to strengthen our collaboration in Rome and in our member countries – where it counts the most. We will continue to do so in the years ahead. The urgency and scale of the challenge demands nothing less from us.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. This Summit is being held in between two major events – the L'Aquila Summit, which yielded the *L'Aquila Food Security Initiative*, and the forthcoming Copenhagen Summit on climate change, which we hope will result in significant agreements to limit the emission of greenhouse gases.

7. As Your Excellencies will appreciate, agriculture is the sector where food security and climate change intersect. It is therefore critical that we take steps to both enhance agricultural production and productivity, and to limit climate change, which threatens to undermine the very basis for food production.

8. Increasing agricultural production requires that we fully harness the immense potential of technological change. I would like to remind Your Excellencies in this regard that research is the driver of technological change and that it requires minimum and sustained investment to produce results that can transform the production capacity of farmers.

9. Increasing production is however not enough – we have seen that it is not sufficient to avert hunger. Food security requires national and intra-regional infrastructures, such as distribution mechanisms that enable access to food for all. It is critical that farmers are linked to markets – not necessarily international markets, but the last mile to vibrant and competitive local

markets. Such markets are fundamental if low-income consumers are to access food at reasonable prices.

10. In our efforts to enhance agricultural production, we should not lose sight of the fact that farming, no matter at what scale, is a business. It is about making enough money to live well. Commercialization of farming – including smallholder farming – means economic empowerment – the transformation from subsistence farming to small agro-business enterprises.

11. It is also important to remind ourselves that agricultural production is fundamental to sustained economic growth and that it provides the most sustainable safety net. This is what the paths followed by China, India and Brazil clearly show and which other developing countries, particularly in Africa, could profitably follow.

12. The prospects for raising agricultural production and improving food security are, however, increasingly threatened by climate change. Climate change is threatening the ability of entire regions – particularly those parts of Africa that are

dependent on rain-fed agriculture – to maintain current levels of production.

13. Enhancing food security will thus require that major advances are made in Copenhagen to reverse current climate trends.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

14. Efforts to eradicate hunger must necessarily focus on poor rural women and men, as the majority of hungry people in the world live in the rural areas of developing countries and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods.

15. Five hundred million smallholder farms worldwide currently support around 2 billion people, or one third of the world's population. They produce 80 per cent of the food consumed in developing countries. Increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers is thus key to securing global food security.

16. And we should always remember that women farmers make up 60 to 70 per cent of smallholder farmers in the developing world. Experience has shown that empowering women farmers is central to achieving food security and agricultural development. There is abundant empirical evidence that shows that empowering rural women results in improved rural livelihoods – better child nutrition, improved health and education.

17. This is why I recently accepted the MDG Gender Torch from the Danish Minister for international development ‘to do something extra’ to help the world reach the MDG3 goal: to promote gender equality and empower women.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. Over the last three decades, my organization IFAD has invested over \$10 billion of its resources to support smallholder farming and thereby enhance food security. We have learnt that with appropriate institutional support, smallholder farmers can indeed dramatically increase their

production and productivity and contribute to reducing hunger.

19. As we mobilize resources to support agriculture in developing countries, it is critical that support to smallholder farmers takes a central place. I would like to assure you in this regard that IFAD will remain true to its mission and mandate — supporting poor rural households to raise their production and incomes and thereby escape the scourge of poverty.

20. More broadly, resolving the global food security crisis will require that the partnership initiated at L’Aquila is fully realized. The international donor community must ensure that the resources promised are indeed forthcoming and that it enters into a sustained and strong partnership with the developing world. Developing countries on their part would need to invest the political will and create the right policy environment for economic and agricultural development.

21. An essential element of the global partnership should be the acceptance of **mutual accountability** to ensure that donor countries honour their pledges and developing countries put

their houses in order, investing the necessary political capital and actually practicing good governance and guarding democracy.

22. I am confident that with such a framework we will indeed succeed in banishing the scourge of hunger and poverty from the face of the earth. But we must go beyond declarations, statements and commitments. These do not feed hungry people. What we need today is action.

23. I thank you for your kind attention.