



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT**

**OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE,**

**COMRADE ROBERT GABRIEL MUGABE,**

**AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

**WORLD FOOD SUMMIT, ROME, ITALY:**

**16<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2009.**

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,  
Your Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the  
United Nations,  
Your Excellency, Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the  
Food and Agriculture Organisation,  
Heads of Specialised Agencies of the United Nations,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Comrades and Friends.

At the First World Food Summit in 1996, we set ourselves the goal of reducing, by the year 2015, the number of food insecure people in the world by half. Regrettably, nearly 13 years later, that number has actually increased to an estimated 1 billion, the majority of whom are in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our Summit should thus honestly and critically examine the root causes of this food insecurity in many parts of the world and lead us to adopt concrete proposals for resolving them. The factors militating against food security in developing

countries include the negative impact of climate change; scarcity of or inaccessibility to land; the rising costs of agricultural inputs; lack of resources to finance farming activities; the trade-distorting agricultural subsidies paid by the industrialised countries to their farmers, and poor agricultural support infrastructure. Add to this, denial of market access to agricultural products from developing countries and that completes the host of factors which undermine crop production in our countries.

Of these challenges, climate change has had the most devastating impact, especially in Africa. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, for instance, the frequency and severity of droughts and floods has intensified over the last ten years, undermining the region's ability to attain the Millennium Development Goals and the targets of the 1996 World Food Summit. Population growth, urbanisation, pre- and post-harvest losses and problems of food hygiene also affect the quality and safety of food supplies in developing countries.

We in Zimbabwe have come to realize that besides adverse nature and ruinous agricultural policies of powerful nations, there is also the challenge of punitive policies of certain countries whose interests stand opposed to our quest for the equity and justice of our land reforms. We face very hostile interventions by these states which have imposed unilateral sanctions on us. This has had a negative impact on our farmers who, according to our neo-colonialist enemies, must fail so as to damn the land reforms we have undertaken. We have also seen a wish to make us dependent on food imports as opposed to enhancing our own capacity for production.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My country's agricultural policy objective is primarily to ensure national and household food security mainly through our own efforts of production. Zimbabwe, like most Southern African countries, depends on rain-fed agriculture, which has hampered economic development due to the unreliability of rainfall for sustained crop production. To mitigate the country's vulnerability to the vagaries of the weather, Zimbabwe has an ongoing programme of dam construction

across the country to harness water and develop reliable water resources. This increase in the number and capacity of dams has appreciably enhanced the availability of water resources for irrigation development. With adequate levels of support, Zimbabwe has the potential to increase the land under irrigation from the present 153 000 to 453 000 hectares.

Besides the water shortages induced by climate change, Zimbabwe has also been affected by shortages of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and agricultural chemicals. We have come to realize that our quest for food security is tied to investment in industrial projects that focus on inputs production. Further, Government continues to support the agriculture sector through a number of credit schemes, including concessionary loans for working capital, and the procurement of equipment and machinery. To buttress these schemes, the government has also introduced a farm mechanisation programme targeting both smallholder and commercial farming sectors. But we remain keenly aware that the mechanisation programme cannot be complete if it does not yield the capacity to enable us to export value-added products.

We are grateful for the support we have received from the SADC region, which provided seeds and fertilisers through the SADC Agricultural Inputs Support Initiative. With this support from SADC, the country experienced a dramatic 75 per cent increase in maize production this year. For the 2009/2010 season, we have received support from various international cooperating partners who provided input packs through the Small Holder Emergency Support Programme which is coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and is expected to reach over 600 000 households. Zimbabwe is grateful for this support.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent energy crisis has once again brought the importance of developing alternative sources of energy to the fore. Combined with the power outages we experienced last year as a result of the energy deficit in the SADC region, the rise in oil prices has had a negative impact on our farming activities. As a result, we have since 2004, given priority to the development of bio-energy, with particular emphasis on diesel and ethanol. To avoid the negative effects of using

maize as bio-fuel feedstock, our project uses jatropha seed and sugar cane. The use of jatropha seed as feedstock in the bio-diesel programme has expanded the market for the jatropha seed, thus generating incomes for communities, mainly those in rural areas. Being a crop that thrives on marginally productive soils, jatropha does not pose any threat to the country's staple maize crop or other cereals in terms of competition for land.

Mr Chairman,

Despite the decline in the HIV prevalence rate in the 15-49 year age-group to 13,7 per cent, Zimbabwe remains concerned that the rate is still high because the people most affected by the pandemic comprise in the main the most economically productive group in society. In response to the effects of the epidemic on the agricultural sector, my government has adopted the Zimbabwe Agricultural Sector Strategy on HIV and AIDS whose main objective is to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, although hampered at the moment by resource constraints.



Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe has made good progress under the Comprehensive African Agricultural Programme Frame (AADP), the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security, and the 2003 Maputo Declaration on allocating at least 10 per cent of the budget to agriculture. Zimbabwe will not allow land alienation from the indigenous farmers by a new class of imported would-be land owners as this would negate our people-centred land policy and create new bitter land conflicts.

We welcome the decision taken at the food security session held on the sidelines of the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, on 10 July this year, to mobilize US\$20 billion support for sustainable agricultural development over the next three years. We hope the fund will not be politicised, and will be directed solely towards assisting developing countries in developing effective agricultural adaptation strategies. Besides the need for increased investment in agriculture, we wish to appeal for unwavering political commitment to the Doha Round of trade negotiations so that it can lead to sustainable and equitable



reform of policies governing global trade in agricultural commodities.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate the call for urgent and substantial increases in investment in agriculture in developing countries. It is also critical that agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilisers and chemicals be made easily available to small scale farmers, especially women and young people. Finally, may western countries please remove their illegal and inhuman sanctions on my country and its people!

I thank you.

RGM/lmn