

Check against delivery.

**Keynote speech
of Minister Nikolaus Berlakovich, Minister
of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management
AUSTRIA**

Mr Chairman,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all I would like to convey the sincere wishes of Minister Berlakovich for the success of the World Food Summit 2009 which is of great importance to the world and its regions. Due to unforeseen reasons Minister Berlakovich is unfortunately not able to attend today. Let me also congratulate you Mr. Chairman, as well as the Vice Chairpersons of this Conference, on your responsible functions.

2. We as members of FAO together with FAO are aware of the fact that the international community has been confronted with enormous challenges. The recently held High-Level Expert Forum and the Committee on World Food Security remind us that we are far from reaching our common objective, adopted by the two previous FAO World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002, namely to halve poverty and hunger by 2015.

3. We are alarmed by the constantly increasing number of people suffering from hunger and poverty which now exceeds 1 billion.

Population growth, rural exodus and the concentration of the population in cities are one crucial problem. However, the effects of longstanding underinvestment in food security, agriculture, and rural development along with recent food, financial and economic crises further exacerbate the situation, jeopardizing progress made in the past decades in fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

4. Moreover, climate change poses additional severe risks for food security and the agriculture sector, particularly for small-holder farmers and for already vulnerable populations. A firm commitment to the adaptation of and mitigation in agriculture, including through conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, is needed in this context. With regard to biofuels there is the potential to contribute to development under certain conditions, however, their expansion should be more closely monitored in order to ensure that their negative impacts will not outweigh their benefits.

5. It is estimated that agricultural output will have to increase by 70 percent between now and 2050, to meet the food requirements of a world population expected to surpass 9 billion in 2050. Therefore measures have to be taken to ensure access - physical, social and economic - by all people to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Nevertheless a further expansion of land utilisation or its intensification – also by means of irrigation or uprooting – has, in view of the sustainability, to be considered as problematic.

6. Given the severe threats posed by climate change to food security, we will need to ensure that all countries world-wide have access to the plant genetic resources for food and agriculture they will need to maintain agricultural biodiversity. Therefore, Austria strongly supports the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as an instrument that helps us all to prepare for the predicted consequences of climate change. We are very much encouraged with the ongoing development of the Treaty's benefit-sharing fund that allows to maintain the in situ variety of resources.

7. The following political and national framework conditions along with international cooperation and solidarity are essential to move forward in achieving food security: Democracy, the rule of law as well as good, transparent governance; the respect of human rights, conflict avoidance; sustainable economic growth in rural areas; investments in jobs and education as well as preventive health care systems for the poor. In principle, it is the task of each individual country to solve its problems, the international community of states can only support those individual approaches.

8. Recognising actions being taken at global, regional and national levels, we must accelerate steps to reverse this trend and to set the world on a path to sustainable global food security. The EU, through successive reforms, has made its policies more market-oriented and more development-friendly, while maintaining a safety net for the producers. The future development of the CAP must be treated as highly relevant with regard to global food security, for the EU to be seen as an even more coherent, credible and leading partner to

developing countries. Let me underline that Europe and its Common Agricultural Policy is part of the solution.

9. In pursuing the path of global sustainable development in social, environmental and economic terms there is a clear interest in seeing a strong and effective reformed FAO sufficiently staffed with technical experts in the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and capable of exploiting the opportunities and tackling the new challenges with regard to the new Committee on World Food Security, the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis as well as the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security. In this context Austria also shares the analysis made by the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) on the present relationship between FAO, WFP and IFAD: there is the necessity to further improve the collaboration of the three Rome-based institutions.

10. Austria also supports the efforts of the FAO in the field of emergency operations and rehabilitation since emergency food aid continues to be a priority issue. Austria also continues to take part in the International Food Aid Convention with the aim that food aid promotes agricultural production in the respective countries and does not hamper it.

11. Mister Chairman: Maintaining a globally viable and sustainable agriculture must be an important concern to all of us fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty side by side with FAO.

Thank you for your attention.