



**STATEMENT BY HONORABLE JOHN T HICKEY, CBE, MP,
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK, PAPUA NEW
GUINEA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON
FOOD SECURITY**

16-18 November 2009, FAO Rome Headquarters

**His Excellency, Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO; World
Leaders; Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen:**

It is indeed a pleasure to attend this very important summit in Rome. I would like to thank the Director-General of FAO for convening this important meeting to deliberate and reinforce food security as a major global agenda in the face of global economic downturn, increased poverty and hunger, unsustainable use of natural resources, frequent occurrence of natural disasters and the emerging issue of Climate Change.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is richly endowed with natural resources. Hence, its main economic exports are agriculture (Palm Oil, Coffee, Cocoa, Coconut, Rubber & Tea), fisheries, forestry, mineral (Copper & Gold) and crude oil products.

Overall, the PNG economy performed well due to high commodity prices prior to the global financial crisis that started in 2007 with annual growth of Real GDP ranging from 3.3% in 2005 to 7.2% in 2008.

In 2008, the global recession adversely impacted on the economy particularly on the export sector resulting in the current account recording a deficit and the kina slightly depreciating in the nine months to September 2009. Inflation also increased in 2008 mainly due to a larger than expected

fiscal deficit and high international oil and food prices, and peaked at 13.5% in September of 2008.

However, there are positive future signs for the PNG economy along the lines of the global economic recovery as a result of investment of large fiscal stimulus measures undertaken by the major economies. The Bank of PNG projection for 2009 is for GDP growth to be around 5% and inflation to decline significantly.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen:

The agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector in PNG plays an important role because it is a source of food, income and employment and supports about 85% of the population who lives mainly in rural areas. These renewable agriculture sectors contribute about 24% of total exports and 30% of the country's total GDP.

The food security situation in PNG is characterized by adequate food availability from local production and food imports. It is estimated that 4.5 billion tons of traditional staples (e.g. sweet potato, banana, taro, cassava, yams, sago) are produced annually by small holders. Whilst there are ample quantities of these staples, the diets, especially in rural remote areas are poor in terms of nutrient content, which is manifested by high rates of malnutrition and other nutrient-related disorders and diseases.

Accessibility to food is a major problem, especially in rural areas. This is due to a high level of poverty (estimated at 40 %) caused by low levels of income and poor access to social and economic services such as markets and inadequate road networks. High prices of imported food like rice, flour and canned foods also make it difficult for low income earners and rural people to have access to food.

Sustainability and stability of food supplies is also a huge problem due to adverse effects of climate change such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels and ingress of trans-boundary pests and diseases.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen:

PNG has in place relevant policies, plans and strategies to deal with its food security situation. These includes; PNG National Food Security Policy 2000-

2010; PNG Rice Development Policy 2004-2014; and the National Agriculture Development Plan 2007-2016 (NADP) underpinned by the Medium Term Development Strategy 2005-2010, the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The goals and objectives of these policies consistently seek to improve food security by reducing poverty, promoting income generation and improving food availability, accessibility, utilization, sustainability and stability.

The PNG National Government has committed an annual funding of K100 million (US 30 million) over the next ten (10) years commencing in 2007 towards the implementation of NADP as the blueprint for the agriculture sector.

All the National Policies and Plans including the NADP will be aligned with the long term plan called “National Strategic Plan 2010-2050” that espouses a vision of having a happy, wealthy and united country by 2050.

Since food security is a multi-dimensional issue, the implementation of the afore-mentioned food security policies is jointly done in collaboration with a number of organizations such as provincial and district governments, relevant line government agencies, private sector and NGOs and major international development partners including AusAID, NZAID, JICA, FAO, SPC, EU, PRC China, World Bank & ADB to whom we are grateful.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen:

The PNG Government also notes and acknowledges the important role FAO plays in assisting the country in its endeavours to address the challenges of achieving food security. PNG has been a beneficiary of many completed and ongoing FAO Technical Assistance programmes including:

- Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) 1996-2000 & 2004-2006
- Regional Program for Food Security 2005-2007
- Formulation of National Agriculture Development Plan 2006-2007
- Upscale of National Plan for Food Security 2006
- Initiative on Soaring Food Prices 2008-2009 and
- Telefood Projects.

As the minister responsible for Agriculture and Livestock, I am pleased to note that PNG in collaboration with FAO has successfully completed the formulation of its National Medium Term Priority Framework (NMTPF) in September this year.

The NMTPF is more focused and would serve as a formal basis for mutual collaboration between PNG and FAO and for PNG to seek technical assistance in areas of policies and institutions, marketing, agribusiness and trade and sustainable natural resource management. These will compliment the National Food Security Programs to address PNG food security issues and contribute to the achievement of MDGs, particularly MDG number one- *Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger*. In this respect and in the PNG context, the country aims to reduce poverty by 10 percent and increase agriculture production by 10 and 34 percent in commercial and subsistence agriculture sector respectively by 2015.

To this end, the government has established a National MDG steering committee to coordinate, monitor and track the status and progress of achievement of the eight MDGs. The current indication of progress however shows that, PNG like most countries of the world will not achieve the targets of all the MDGs by 2015 and therefore requires assistance from our development partners.

This assistance would complement the efforts of the current government under the leadership of Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare towards the development of the renewable sector to combat poverty and hunger.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen:

The national government is committed to addressing the impact of climate change on the environment, socio-economic and food security and has established an office of Climate Change to coordinate the implementation of mitigation and adaptation interventions to cope with the effects of climate change.

The government is also serious about greenhouse gas emission reduction and is embracing the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation) concept due to the considerable size of forest resources that we have which stands at 29 million hectares. We can use our forest resources

utilizing the REDD mechanism to contribute to the reduction in overall global greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time generate economic benefits for land owners through carbon trading.

For these reasons, under the leadership of Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, PNG as a member of the Coalition of Rainforest Countries - is taking the lead together with Costa Rica on the global front to promote the REDD mechanism.

As a result of this, the United Nations through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has decided to refocus its attention on REDD and consolidating REDD as a viable mechanism to combat Climate Change.

REDD will be a major agenda during the up coming conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December 2009 and I am confident that the International Community will be convinced of its potential.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen:

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank His Excellency Jacques Diouf-Director General of FAO for his global leadership and being at the fore-front of fighting the problem of poverty and hunger. I would like to assure the Director-General that the PNG government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, and within the limits of its resources, is committed to working with FAO to combat the problems of poverty, hunger and food insecurity.

I would also like to join other leaders in thanking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and His Royal Highness King Abdulla for his generous funding of the World Summit on Food Security in Rome.

Thank you for your attention.

HONORABLE JOHN T HICKEY, CBE, MP
Minister for Agriculture & Livestock
Papua New Guinea.