

**Statement by Ms Egly Pantelakis, Ag. Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Cyprus
to the World Summit on Food Security
Rome, 16-18 November 2009**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like first of all to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization for organising the present World Summit on Food Security, but also to comment the Members for the commitment and the hard work carried out in finalizing the Declaration, which has been approved yesterday.

The situation regarding the global food insecurity is worsening and continues to represent a serious threat for humanity. With food prices remaining stubbornly high in developing countries, the number of people suffering from hunger has been steadily growing in recent years. The global economic crisis is aggravating the situation by affecting jobs and deepening poverty. For the first time in history, more than one billion people are undernourished worldwide. This is about 100 million more than last year and it means that one in every six persons suffers from hunger every day.

Poor countries need the development, as well as the economic and policy tools which are required to boost their agricultural production and productivity. Investment in agriculture must be increased because a healthy agricultural sector is essential to overcome hunger and poverty and is a pre-requisite for the overall economic growth. The gravity of the current food crisis is the result of 20 years of

under-investment in agriculture and neglect of the sector. However, directly or indirectly, this sector provides the livelihood for 70 percent of the world's poor.

While improvements have been made, the overall efforts so far have fallen short of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments of the World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002. It is widely recognised and accepted that we must collectively accelerate steps to reverse this trend and to set the world on a path to sustainable global food security and to ensure the right to food for all.

Fortunately, there are encouraging signals of a shift in policy. The Joint Statement on Global Food Security at the L'Aquila meeting of the G8 in July this year approved a radical change in strategy with the priority of increasing the production of smallholder farmers in food-deficient developing countries. For this reason, the mobilization of US\$ 20 billion over three years is foreseen for the financing of such a programme. Now this pledge needs to be translated into concrete action.

But, it is not only financial resources that are needed. Beyond the factors that exacerbate the current crisis, there is a whole series of fundamental problems that need to be resolved, in particular how aid is channelled and how to make it reach smallholder farmers effectively, as well as reform of the world food security governance system, for more coherence in the action of governments and development partners, the share of national budgets dedicated to agriculture and private sector investment.

It is vital, particularly in times of crisis, that support to agriculture not be reduced. Only a healthy agricultural sector, combined with a growing non-farm economy and effective safety nets and social protection programmes will be sufficient to face the global recession as well as eradicate food insecurity and poverty.

Another issue which requires our attention is the problem resulting from climate change which poses additional severe risks to food security and the agricultural

sector. Its expected impact is particularly affecting smallholder farmers in developing countries, notably the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the already vulnerable populations. Any recipe for confronting the challenges of climate change must allow for mitigation options and a firm commitment to the adaptation of agriculture, including conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

In concluding my intervention, I wish to emphasise the need to ensure a strong role for the multilateral system by sustainable improvements in efficiency, responsiveness, coordination and effectiveness of the multilateral institutions. We encourage intensified coordination between all UN agencies, especially between FAO, IFAD and WFP, and the International Financial Institutions. The UN must continue to work together as a system, making use of the comparative advantages of its different institutions, in order to increase its effectiveness, including "Delivering as One" at country level.

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

We must keep the challenge of food insecurity on top of our agenda so that the right to food, the most basic of human rights, be respected.

Thank you.