



**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

**STATEMENT**

**By**

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**to the**

**World Summit on Food Security**

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Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. Chairman

Mr. Director General

Distinguished delegates

Let me, first, congratulate the Director General of FAO Dr. J. Diouf for his initiative to organize this Conference and keep the issue of Food Security high on the International Agenda. I would also like to thank all those who were involved in the formulation of the Declaration of principles and commitments to eradicate hunger in the world, which we adopted two days ago.

Mr. Chairman,

I would also like to convey to all of you the greetings and best wishes of the Greek Prime Minister Mr. George Papandreou and his profound concern for the alarming development of food insecurity.

Mr. Chairman,

It is truly an exceptional honour for me to represent my country at this august event and to present my Government's views.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community is facing a major global challenge in modern history, the crisis in food security. Recent years have been devastating for the hungry population of the world, marking a significant downturn in an already disappointing trend in global food security since 1996.

The global economic slowdown, following the food crisis in 2006-08, has deprived more than 100 million people from access to adequate food, constituting a serious threat to humanity and to world's security.

The increasing population of the World, the growing demand from the bio-fuels sector, climate change and severe weather conditions and phenomena causing long period of droughts and natural disasters, as well as the economic growth in some large developing countries, all contribute to food insecurity.

Many countries experience growing imbalances in the agricultural sector and consequent detrimental effects on food security domestically and globally. One can point out the implications of high input cost and low market prices in certain crops, as well as the livestock sector, resulting in loss of income for farmers and reducing the purchasing power of consumers. The alarming point is that while consumer's prices are increasing, that fact is not reflected equally on the prices received by producers.

The irregularity implies that speculative factors play a crucial role, distorting the market forces and therefore, urgently requiring policy measures on a national and international level, to prevent market distortion.

If we fail to address this problem radically right now and allow farmers' income to continue diminishing, we shall experience a tidal wave of rural exodus and land abandonment with severe consequences, taking into account that the reduction of rural population will, in turn, lower food production levels, leading to further insecurity.

The energy sector can benefit from agriculture through the development of a second generation of bio-fuels. The synergy of the primary and secondary sectors of the economy in exploiting agricultural waste and by-products to produce energy by using advanced technology could substantially contribute to more green energy and, ultimately, to an integrated environmental management.

The response to the negative impact of bio-fuels is to release land set aside and abolish subsidies to energy crops, in order to increase the production of grains and alleviate food shortages globally.

We, therefore, stand firm on the principle that the priority of agriculture is to produce food crops instead of bio-fuels crops.

Mr. Chairman

Food availability should be doubled by 2050 as mentioned in the Declaration. This can only be accomplished if applied agricultural research provides new solutions and techniques. We feel that, for many years, we have overlooked the issue considerably and it is time to make agricultural research a top priority in our agenda, allocating the appropriate resources.

Greece contributes to these efforts mainly through its Development Policy. Despite the restrictions imposed by the need to manage the financial crisis, Greece has succeeded to increase in 2008 the percentage of its Development Assistance. At the same time, the number of projects supported has constantly increased from 443 in 2006, to 512 in 2007 to reach 645 projects funded in 2008. We recognize, however, that there is still a lot to be done to reach the target of 0.7 percent of the GDP by 2015. The positive results achieved however during this period of global crisis are the demonstration of the willingness of Greece to contribute in overcoming the crisis and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially the first one, in an environmentally sustainable way.

Food security becomes more acute during humanitarian emergencies. Greece has mobilized substantial part of its assistance in facing man-made and natural catastrophes.

We recognize, however, that food aid is not the answer to food insecurity and that strengthening the agricultural sector is of utmost importance for improving food security.

I should point out that Agriculture is a sectoral priority of Greek Development Assistance. In particular, Greece financially supports projects of technical assistance in the agricultural sector in Africa and Asia and also provides scholarships on Agro-Management and Food Production to students from countries of those two continents.

Furthermore, Greece attaches particular attention to the Fisheries sector. The Greek government is co-funding and offering headquarters facilities to a project which seeks to develop responsible fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean, in a coherent and sustainable way for all countries of the area. It further aims at implementing pilot projects in marine aquaculture in the North Africa and Indian Ocean regions.

With regard to geographic distribution, commitments and delivery of aid to Sub-Saharan Africa have increased in recent years by 48 percent, in line with the commitment of the international community to provide half of the increase of its assistance to this geographic area.

This brief account indicates in which ways, within its limited resources, my country has sought to assist vulnerable populations in order to overcome the short term consequences of the food price surge and to endow them with the tools for a longer term development of their agricultural sector. We will continue to do so bilaterally and multilaterally, especially in cooperation with the FAO, in accordance with our five year development plan.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the support of my country to the principles of the Declaration joining the world in its efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition.

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The right to adequate food has been recognized as one of the basic human rights without which no other human right can be realized. We should seize the opportunity given to us by this Summit to reiterate our will to make this basic human right a universal reality.

Thank you for your attention.