



**9 JULY 2012**

***30th SESSION OF FAO COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES (COFI)***

***OPENING STATEMENT BY THE FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO***

Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Observers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor to welcome you to the 30th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries.

COFI provides a necessary high-level forum for country representatives and fisheries authorities to discuss fisheries and aquaculture related matters at the highest level.

Fisheries and aquaculture play a vital role in the global, national and rural economy. The livelihoods of 12 percent of the world's population depend directly or indirectly on them.

Fisheries and aquaculture give an important contribution to food security and nutrition. They are the primary source of protein for 17 percent of the world's population and nearly a quarter in low-income food deficit countries.



Ladies and gentlemen,

In a world with sufficient food production, but with over nine hundred (900) million hungry people and over 70 percent of the world's extremely poor and hungry living in the rural areas of developing countries, we cannot think that producing more is the answer to food security.

In this context, the business as usual approach has shown its limitations.

That is why FAO embarked on a strategic thinking process when I took up office in January 2012.

Based on broad and participative consultation across the Organization, with inputs from an external Strategy Experts Panel, FAO Members and partners, we are reviewing and redefining our strategic direction.

In this process, we have identified eleven global trends that affect our work, and seven global challenges in the areas of food security and agriculture. Based on this, and on our core functions and comparative advantages and strengths, we have proposed five strategic objectives on which our work should focus. They are:

First, to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition;

Second, to increase production in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in an economic, social and environmentally sustainable manner;

Third, to improve the livelihood of rural populations, in particular women and youth, through enhanced employment opportunities and increased access to production resources;

Fourth, to enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national, regional and international levels;



Fifth, to increase the resilience of rural livelihoods to threats and crises.

This process has received inputs from every FAO governing body that has met this year, including technical committees and the Regional Conferences.

The FAO Council held in June endorsed the strategic objectives proposed.

We will continue to consult with FAO committees and governing bodies during the second semester.

We are now in the process of developing these strategic objectives into plans of action.

The fisheries and aquaculture vision for the future paper you will discuss this week is already integrated to the ongoing strategic thinking process and the emerging strategic objectives.

We count on your inputs and guidance.

Let me highlight that all five regional conferences of FAO asked to improve our work on fisheries. And at least three of them – Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean – set aquaculture among the priorities for the current and next biennium. I am sure that, together, we will find ways to improve our work in fisheries and aquaculture in the field and Headquarters.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Committee has a full and demanding agenda. I would like to briefly refer to some other issues that you will be discussing this week.

The Committee is invited to review the status, issues and needs of world fisheries and aquaculture and provide guidance to FAO's work. A presentation of the State



of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2012 will be made to help set the scene for these deliberations.

You will take stock of progress made in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted 17 years ago. The Committee is invited to provide guidance on how to continue to broaden and deepen the implementation of the Code and related instruments.

This week, COFI is also expected to give further guidance on the development of a new international instrument on small-scale fisheries in the form of international guidelines.

Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains a high priority. We will report on new developments and discuss the next steps.

The Committee will also address ocean governance the outcomes of The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20). As such, it will be one of the first international bodies discussing the meeting.

Let me point out that, in our view, the oceans chapter of the outcome document of Rio+20 is one of its strongest.

FAO believes that we left Rio closer to the future we want. With most of the world's attention focused on the economy and finances, we were still able to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development.

And we linked, definitively, the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. There is no turning back now.

Agreement was also reached to have Sustainable Development Goals in the post-2015 period.



FAO is particularly pleased because the main messages we took to Rio together with IFAD, WFP and Bioversity International are reflected in the outcome document of Rio+20.

The most important one is the clear recognition that we cannot have sustainable development while hundreds of millions of children, women and men are condemned to a life of hunger and extreme poverty.

The right to food, the importance of small-scale production, and the need to shift towards more sustainable models of production and consumption and to improve global governance systems are also underlined in the document.

The role of the Committee on World Food Security in food governance and its inclusive nature is also valued.

And the governments participating in Rio+20 also called for the national implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, a task that FAO is ready to assist governments to do.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You have a very busy and active program over the next five days. I wish you every success in your deliberations and encourage you to actively participate in the main session as well as the side events.

Thank you.