



6 June 2012

World Farmers Organization General Assembly

Your Excellency Giorgio Napolitano, President of Italy,

Mr. Antonio Marzano, Presidente del Consiglio Nazionale Economia del Lavoro,

Mr. Kanayo Nwanze,

President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD,

Mr. Giorgio Alemanno, Mayor of Rome,

Mr. Robert Carlson, President of the World Farmers' Organization, in whose name I also greet the cooperatives and producer organizations present today from around the world,

Mr. Ken Davies, representing the World Food Program,

WFP Permanent Representatives,

Excellencies,

Friends, farmers and colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to speak at the General Assembly of the World Farmers' Organization. I want to thank the invitation and also thank the Governments of Italy and Rome for the hospitality they have shown FAO in the past decades and their commitment to promoting food security worldwide.

For a long time, small-scale farmers around the world have been seen as part of the problem of hunger, but, in fact, they are part of the solution.

With adequate support, including access to credit, markets and technology, they can quickly bridge the productivity gap most have and adopt more sustainable farming practices.

Considering that at least seventy (70) percent of the world's extremely poor people live in rural areas, this is key not only for promoting food security, but also



for achieving sustainable development which will take center-stage at Rio Plus 20 (Rio+20).

Food security is also critical for peace and social stability. Throughout the world we see crisis after crisis caused, in its entirety or in part, due to the lack of food or disputes for natural resources, especially land and water.

Ladies and gentlemen, Cooperatives and farmer organizations have a key role to play in the future without hunger that we want.

Standing alone, a smallholder has fewer opportunities. When farmers get together, they have a stronger voice and better access to services, information and markets, from local to international.

Likewise, standing alone, no single organization or single country, can eradicate hunger. We need political commitment at the highest level and a collective effort.

That is why FAO is strengthening its collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Program (WFP) and other agencies. And that is why enhancing partnerships is one of the priorities of my mandate.

Since I took up office on January First (1st), I have opened the doors of FAO to farmers associations, cooperatives, civil society movements, non-governmental organizations, private sector and other partners.

This is necessary to assure that the voice of small-scale producers, pastoralists and fisher folk are heard.

In expanding our partnerships, we are looking for those with whom we share a common vision. Today, this vision is represented by the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the



Context of National Food Security. We call on all our current and potential partners, including the World Farmers' Organization and their associates, to endorse them. And to help implement them at the country-level.

The Voluntary Guidelines are a breakthrough consensus reached by governments, civil society and the private sector. It is a good example of the work the CFS, the world's most inclusive international platform dealing with food security and nutrition, can do.

These guidelines are not the solution to all our problems, but can help pave the way to a food-secure world, to the world we want.

The challenges we face today are different from those of the past. Today, we need to produce and consume food sustainably, improve rural livelihoods, with a focus on gender equity, promote inclusive agricultural systems, resilience and better governance at all levels.

These are the challenges FAO is transforming itself to respond to. And we want you to be our partners.

Thank you.