



29 June 2013, Addis Ababa

Remarks at the Preparatory Meeting of non-state actors renewed partnership for a unified approach to end hunger in Africa

African Union

Distinguished Guests,

Representatives of civil society, producer organizations, the private sector, cooperatives, the research community in Africa and other non-state actors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank you all for being here today. We are truly honored with your participation in this multi-stakeholder dialogue. Only this way can we bring together our views, our voices, our skills and our strengths, to succeed in building a hunger-free Africa.

The challenge is huge. Africa is the only region that saw hunger numbers go up after 1990. Today, one out of every four Africans is food insecure.

But Africa also has many success stories. Just two weeks ago, at FAO Headquarters in Rome, we recognized 11 African countries for meeting internationally agreed targets for halving the proportion of hungry people well before the 2015 deadline established by the Millennium Development Goals. They are: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Djibouti, Ghana, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria Sao Tome and Principe and Togo

Three of these countries have gone further and cut by half the total number of hungry people, as called for by the World Food Summit in 1996. They are Djibouti, Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe.

To end hunger in Africa or almost anywhere in the world, it will not be enough to simply increase the production of food. Instead, we must acknowledge and address the many inter-



connected factors that keep people from being food secure, including poverty and persistent social and economic inequalities and lack of access.

In Africa, agricultural and rural development combined with social protection has proven to be one of the most successful forms to achieve food security.

And we must also learn that we need to work together. The decision to end hunger needs to be taken by society as a whole, not by a single organization or a single government. So, when I say that “we” need to join forces against hunger, I am referring to governments, the UN system and other international and regional organizations, including the African Union and others in Africa, academia, the private sector, producers’ organizations; social movements; civil society organizations; and many other partners.

Those of you who are here have already made this decision. Your presence says that, with hunger, the only acceptable number is zero. And that you are ready to help transform a food-secure Africa into a reality.

Let me add that FAO we do not want you only to join us in meetings and signing declarations. We want to work together at all levels, including on the ground level.

We hope that this meeting will help us to coordinate and mobilize further our common efforts to promote food security. This is what motivated the African Union Commission, FAO and the Lula Institute to join forces and establish this partnership.

Working together, we will support countries’ efforts within the framework of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP). This is very important: we do not need to reinvent the wheel, we need to work with the structures and the plans that already exist and that are more than enough.

In this context, the involvement of other stakeholders is very important. Africa has a vibrant and varied society. It is crucial to ensure that the views and concerns of these members of society are heard and help articulate a clear set of actions with a view to eliminating hunger.

The need for inclusiveness, scope, legitimacy and strength in these frameworks and policies cannot be stressed enough. They help us work towards policies that go beyond looking good on paper, to actually making a difference in people’s lives.

FAO believes in this and is acting in this direction. Since I took up office in January 2012, FAO has fostered an open-door policy for a wide range of partners, including civil society organizations, producer associations and cooperatives, private sector entities and research institutions.



Last year, we established workstations at our Rome headquarters for civil society organizations, and small-scale producer groups and cooperatives. I have also instructed our field offices to engage with these partners.

We actively supported the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012. In 2014, we will lead the efforts in the International Year of Family Farming, recognizing the key contribution that these farmers give to food security, to sustainable development, to preserving traditional foods and to inclusive local economic development. Let me take the opportunity to invite you to a regional dialogue on family farming that will take place in the second semester of this year in South Africa. More information will follow later, but let me say that you are all invited.

And just three months ago, FAO's Council approved two strategies for partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector. These strategies were consulted with our partners and approved by FAO Member States. They lay down in a clear and transparent way, how we can work together with these partners in areas like policy, field programs, advocacy and the use and mobilization of resources, within the scope of action defined by the countries that are part of FAO.

This is an ongoing dialogue. Every time I travel, I make sure that I meet with civil society and private sector representatives, to get direct feedback on what is working well and how can we form or strengthen partnerships. Let me just mention one example. In May, in Indonesia, I discussed with La Via Campesina's coordinator Henry Saragih how to collaborate to promote food security, focusing on three areas: agroecology, responsible agricultural investments, and family farming.

True to this new way of working, we have already signed or are discussing agreements, among others, with the Slow Food Movement, Rabobank, the Global Development Cooperative, the International Cooperative Alliance, La Via Campesina, the CGIAR Consortium and Embrapa.

With you as our partners, we are already assisting many governments in creating and strengthening food security governance mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels. We believe that strengthening these mechanisms and establishing forums that allow for the dialogue between governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and other non-state actors is an important pillar for food security.

The most emblematic of these is the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, approved last year by the Committee on World Food Security, the cornerstone of the new governance system that we are building together.

As important as the Voluntary Guidelines themselves, is the inclusive process that led to their approval. It involved international, regional and national consultations. Over one thousand experts, civil society and private sector representatives and government officials from 130



countries took part in this debate. This same participatory approach will be used by the CFS in the discussions on the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments that are being discussed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Renewed Partnership will help countries to learn from and adapt policies and practices that are already working in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

It will help FAO to better support countries in planning and implementation of agricultural investment plans and other initiatives, within the CAADP framework.

It will help countries to make more effective use of existing international guidelines and platforms to improve food security.

Before finishing, let me tell you a little of what FAO is doing so that it can give a more significant contribution to promoting food security and sustainable development. We are working in two directions: strategic planning and strengthening our capacity at the regional level.

We have finished a strategic planning process that has led to a program of work that focuses our work around five strategic objectives. This Program of Work received the full support of FAO Members and was approved last week by our Conference.

The first strategic objective is to contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Let me add that the FAO Conference also elevated the Organization's first global goal from reducing to eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. It is just one word but that makes all the difference. It says that we don't accept hunger.

The second strategic objective is to increase production in a sustainable manner

The third one is to reduce rural poverty.

The fourth one is to enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.

And the fifth one is to increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises

A sixth technical objective guarantees the technical quality of our work and the knowledge products and services that we offer.

These objectives are complemented by six regional initiatives – one for each region and two for Africa – that directly respond to priorities identified by the FAO Regional Conferences. In Africa, the first regional initiative focuses on reducing rural poverty and in building resilience in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, working with CILSS and IGAD.



FAO is also strengthening its presence in Africa by stationing more technical experts in the region and by including a liaison function with the African Union to our office here in Addis Ababa.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to end by saying that, For FAO, this meeting is a starting point for a unified and united approach to end hunger in Africa. We are conscious that FAO cannot do it alone. You cannot do it alone. But, together, we can eradicate hunger in our lifetimes.

Thank you for your attention.