

(courtesy translation)

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Statement of the Head of Delegation of Italy, Hon. Nunzia DE GIROLAMO,
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Italy

Mr. President

First of all let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election.
Allow me also to welcome the new members of this Organization,.

Mr. President,

I am very honoured to represent Italy, the host country and historically one of the top donors of FAO and to reiterate the strong commitment of my Government to support FAO, as the leading Agency for Food Security, Nutrition, and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development. My Government considers the General Conference as the highest qualified global forum, for debating , coordinating and planning agricultural, food security and nutrition policies, to promote sustainable development, in particular to the benefit of the partner countries.

I am very honoured to be here today to support the initiatives taken in this forum, which provide an essential network for a closer coordination and planning of international agricultural policies.

In this framework, I strongly agree with FAO agenda on the need to engage to reduce hunger and under-nutrition.

We have encouraging data that show some progress towards the achievement of MDG 1, nevertheless more efforts need to be made in this direction.

Statistics by FAO estimate that about 870 million people - 852 million of which live in developing countries - are undernourished. A number still too high which clearly demands some reflections.

We are all responsible in finding together effective and common actions to reduce hunger and malnutrition. Italy agrees that reducing food price volatility and increasing food production is certainly a way. But these actions should be supported by capacity building initiatives to empower partner Countries in drawing efficient

agricultural policies; these policies will have to take into due account the role of women, whose work most contributes to food security in rural areas, the respect of the biodiversity and the hydro geological challenges of their territories. In addition, Italy reiterates the importance to support the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as a fundamental tool to achieve Food Security.

Following the commitment of the l'Aquila Summit, the recent G8 conference on Open Data for Agriculture held in Washington on the 29th of April stressed the importance of sharing information valuable for farmers, researchers and policymakers in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Italy is supporting this action with 35 agricultural databases which will soon be made available in an open access format.

Italy believes that this activity as well as others within the G8 and G20 forum, must be in line with the decisions agreed within FAO and the Committee on World Food Security and in close coordination with other international organisations that work to eradicate world hunger.

As Minister of Agriculture of a country that has historically contributed to enhance the role of a specialized and qualified agriculture, I agree with the vision of a world where food - also meaning good quality food, is guaranteed to all - and we should all be obliged to ensure that our citizens have a healthy life.

In this regard, the recent report on the State of Food and Agriculture highlights the costs of malnutrition in a broader perspective that includes problems such as overeating. To this I would add a subject to which I am particularly committed, which is the fight against food waste, particularly relevant also in Europe. These are problems that we can address in particular through better nutrition education from the youngest.

We should not overlook the environmental aspects, an essential component of the integrated policies that we are called upon to implement. In this context, the need to preserve the soil will have an increasing importance, as it is a scarce and fundamental resource, not only for agriculture and food, but also for landscape and environment. This Saturday, the Italian government has approved a bill that aims to protect the soil and the protection of agricultural land. I think this is an important contribution in terms of governance of the territory as it introduces the principle of containment of land consumption.

All these are issues, Mr. President, on which international cooperation is particularly needed.

I would like to conclude addressing the importance of the Expo 2015 that will be held in Milano. The main theme of the event – to whose the Organizations of the Rome-

Based Agencies are actively contributing - is not by chance *Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life*. I invite all governments not only to participate and visit the Expo but also contribute to its preparation and success. This event will be a great occasion to learn more of each other best practices and experiences in the field of food and agriculture. It will also be an opportunity to establish a network for private and public partnerships which share the common view of a planet with a sustainable growth.

Thank you.