

His Excellency Cenio Lewis

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Mr Chairman, Honorable Minsters, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words at the 38th Session of this FAO Conference.

The goals which we all set in relation to reduction and eradication of hunger have been eloquently stated by previous speakers. Therefore, I will not repeat them save to say that we must at all times keep these goals constantly in focus.

I am aware that the solution to the task of reduction and elimination of hunger requires time, but for 870 million people who are still hungry time is merely dragging on while they wait and quite often it can be too late for some.

There is in the words of the Director-General's Medium Term Plan, paragraph 59:

Quote: "sufficient capacity in the world to produce enough food to feed everyone adequately." unquote.

If the capacity exists to feed everyone adequately then there is a necessity to access an urgent solution and here I believe that paragraph 60 of the Medium Term Plan provides useful direction for it suggests the need for a "coherent action" across sectors and shareholders together with other factors and agents in the search for hunger reduction and eradication.

Turning specifically to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I wish to thank the FAO for the recognition it has given to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the efforts of the government lead by Prime Minister Ralph Gonzalves and our people in the reduction of hunger from over 20% in the 1990 to 4.9% today.

Our objective in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is to continue along the path of reducing hunger to a zero position. The road along this path will not be easy because we are a small and vulnerable state, vulnerable to climate change, vulnerable to changes in the global economy, vulnerable to all sorts of regulations. I prefer to call some of these regulations, trade restrictions which have serious effects on our economic development. One example of these regulations which comes readily to my mind is the Airport Passenger Duty Tax which has inequitably increased the costs of certain visitors to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and indeed to all Caribbean small island states where the Tourist Industry is crucial to our economic development.

I make this point only to say that there is a connection between the ability to reduce hunger and economic development. But whatever the challenge, we in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will pursue zero hunger eradication. We will do so in trying where possible to assist our small rural farmers who are the bedrock of our agricultural system. In addition, we will place emphasis on education particularly on the importance of conservation of what we have, the careful use of our resources, and improved methods of production. We will also not neglect the importance of education in our schools and generally about the nutritional values of food consumption more value of what we eat rather how much we eat.

In conclusion, I wish to complement the FAO and its Director-General for clearly setting out its strategic objectives, as contained in paragraph 13 of the Medium Term Plan. These objectives are clearly worthy of support.

Achieving objects are never easy in practice and sailing into the challenging waters of hunger reduction and eradication of food insecurity and malnutrition requires careful and sustained navigation.

I believe however that FAO has in its Director-General a competent navigator in the pursuance of the Strategic Objectives it has outlined in the Medium Term Plan.

Thank you.