



**STATEMENT
BY
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MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, SRI LANKA**

**AT
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Mr. Chairperson, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to convey the best wishes of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse, the President of Sri Lanka, and the Government of Sri Lanka to Director General of FAO Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, who leads his team to achieve the set targets clearly spelt out in the strategic Framework, which is being presented and discussed during the Conference. I am sure, that the deliberations will address the issues in the member countries, and find favourable solutions towards the prosperity and wellbeing of the people of our nations.

As Minister of Agriculture of Sri Lanka, I am thankful to Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva personally, for having invited Sri Lanka to this conference, which is the First Conference being conducted under his leadership, therefore considered a privilege and an honour to make this statement on behalf of Government of Sri Lanka at this Conference.

Many of you are aware, that agriculture sector is the foundation of Sri Lanka's economy, with 70% of the population living in rural areas, who depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. It contributes 11-13% to Gross Domestic Product, and employees 30 - 33% of the workforce. Despite a small island, Sri Lanka has a considerable potential for economic growth through agricultural sector, and therefore the Government is very optimistic of the persuasive need to attain food and nutrition security in the country through self-sufficiency.

In this context, Government of Sri Lanka implemented a National Campaign, called "Let Us cultivate and uplift the Nation" during 2007-2010, to accelerate the domestic food production. Having identified the impact of soaring food prices, and recognized enhancing food production as the main strategy to cope up with rising food prices, the Government continued with its national Campaign, by giving high priority to it, while also implementing an additional programme; a special home gardening project termed "Divi Neguma" – Raise the Life – to increase vegetable production, and making available the harvest throughout the year in order to stabilize the market prices.

The intention of this project was to establish 2.5 million domestic units covering all villages in the country. Its prime objective is to strengthen peoples' economic status and minimize their dependency on market for food and nutrition requirement. These programmes aim to raise food production through distribution of high yielding seeds and providing training, technical and credit facility etc.

A High Level Committee on Food and Nutrition Security and Monitoring of Cost of Living chaired by His Excellency the President meets regularly to review the food situation in the country, price movement in the market and other developments in these fields to make policy directives to address the issues arising therein. Moreover the Government has introduced following policy measures being complementary to brace up aforesaid programmes.

- Expansion of paddy purchasing programme, raising floor price of rough rice paid to farmers under paddy purchasing scheme and imposing ceiling price for milled rice in the local market;**
- Continuing fertilizer subsidy scheme with further expansion to other crops;**

- **Relaxing seed import policy allowing to import of hybrid seeds;**
- **Provision of import duty concessions for agricultural machinery;**
- **Adjusting import tariff from time to time in favour of producer and consumer as well.**

As a result of these strategies and directives, Sri Lanka has achieved self-sufficiency in rice, which is our staple food and nearly self-sufficient in maize, meeting high demand derived from rapidly increased poultry industry in the country. Currently, about 8% is deficit to fulfill the entire maize requirement.

Nevertheless, the country is blessed with good potentials to produce pulses, such as green gram, soybean, Black gram, cereal - finger millet, and other crops, such as potato, chilies and big onion within the country, as current production levels of these crops are not adequate to meet the national requirements. Hence, the Government has launched special projects aiming to increase the production of these crops.

To address the challenge of global food and nutrition security, investment in agriculture must play an important role in fostering agricultural productivity. We should encourage all stakeholders at National, Regional and Global levels to work closely with the professionals in the fields of science, technology and industry to ensure that investment in agriculture sector is given a high profile in the country investment Strategy for the sustainable development and world food and nutrition security and agriculture industry.

At this juncture, it would be remiss, if I do not mention the valuable contribution made thus far by FAO, which assisted our country by an array of ways and means in the form of projects. This assistance has given a kind of relief to the Government in term of financial and technical perspectives. The Government of Sri Lanka, highly appreciates this assistance and support rendered by FAO, and looks forward to receiving similar kinds of support in future, under the Leadership of Present Director General, Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva and his team.

Sri Lanka being the Chairperson of the Group of Fifteen, I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Fifteen (G-15), a Summit Level Group of Developing Countries, comprising 17 member states. The fuller statement is available for collection at the Conference.

The Group notes with grave concern that over 850 million people today are chronically undernourished, mostly in developing countries. The Group encourages united global action on food security and undernourishment for this generation and posterity.

The Group welcomes the first version of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition and lends support towards its implementation so as to avert future food crises and hunger and ensure food security and nutrition for all human beings.

The Group fully supports the declaration of year 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming as it draws special attention to the small scale producers, family farmers and cooperatives in the Post 2015 development agenda on food security and nutrition.

The Group stresses the need for renewed, concerted, forward-looking and inclusive efforts to improve agricultural productivity and profitability in a sustainable manner. It recognizes the important role of agriculture trade for achieving food security and nutrition and highlights the negative effects of trade barriers and trade-distorting subsidies of developed countries.

The Group stresses on the need for taking urgent actions to assist developing countries in the field of education, capacity-building and adaptation to the effects of climate change on the agriculture sector particularly for small and medium holders, including through added investments, promoting, and harnessing of new technologies and innovation to enhance food supply, reduce food losses and wastes in developing countries.

In closing, the Group of Fifteen welcomes, recognizes and fully supports the ongoing global efforts towards contributing to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The Group thanks the Director-General and the Secretariat for the elaboration of the PWB and wishes the Conference all the success.

I thank you.