

[As delivered]

In the Name of God

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Hojjati, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture-Jahad,
The Islamic Republic of Iran
At the Thirty-ninth Session of the FAO Conference
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**Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Director General, Mr. Da Silva,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I take privilege to address the FAO Conference, 39th Session.

Honourabe Chairperson

Hunger and poverty, the two closely inter-linked concepts, are a grave insult to honour and dignity of the human societies. A large proportion of the poor population lives in the rural areas. As agriculture constitutes the backbone of the rural economy in many regions, sustainable agriculture and rural development should be an integral part of any systematic solution and effort to eradication of hunger and poverty.

The international community pursues such efforts under the umbrella of the FAO. And it is quite heartening that, since our last conference, the FAO has evinced relentless efforts in this direction under the leadership of Dr. José Graziano Da Silva. This is signified by his election as the FAO Director-General. My most sincere felicitations go to Dr. Da Silva on this occasion.

Excellencies,

Befitting the theme of our conference today, I would like to highlight that the village is the centre of agricultural production, and that sustainable agriculture, is a matter of optimum utilization of the resources base including the soil, water and human capital. This, in turn, requires investment in the agriculture and rural sectors. Elimination of poverty and hunger also would not be possible without durable economic growth, income generation, creation of employment opportunities and enhancement of productivity. The poor should be bestowed with access to jobs, to education, and to easy and fair credits to develop their business and

their skills. Social security nets need to be developed so as to assure that the farmers and the rural population are effectively protected and that their basic needs are properly addressed.

Excellencies,

The Islamic Republic of Iran has accomplished long strides in these directions over the last three decades. The national indicators in most of these areas have improved to acceptable levels as a result of a range of comprehensive policies and programmes. Currently, the state of infrastructure development and welfare facilities in the rural Iran is notable. As an indicative, about 99.6 percent of the Iranian villages have access to electricity, 93 percent to tap water, 70 percent to health centers, 78 percent to fixed and mobile phone, and 45 percent to gas reticulation networks. ICT centers have already been established in over 10,000 villages. Participatory rural administration is functional in almost all the villages. For most of the infrastructure services, the accessibility coefficients in the rural areas are not far behind the urban sector. Also the Programmers and support policies on water and soil improvement, farm engineering, irrigation systems development, farm productivity enhancements, farmer empowerment, farmer cooperative development, credit supply networks, and other types of enabling programmes are paying back.

Distinguished delegates,

It is pleasure that these efforts of the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran are recognized and appreciated by the international community. I take this opportunity to thank the FAO for awarding, yesterday, my country with recognition of fulfilling not only the MDG targets but the goals set by the World food Summit.

It may be stressed, however, that still there is a long way to go. In particular, I may draw your attention to the importance of adopting various approaches for diversifying the on-farm and off-farm activities in the rural areas as a way to break the vicious cycle of poverty. When we speak about introducing resilience to the productive, economic, and social facets of the village, diversification policies with a focus on agricultural activities, completing the supply chain, and strengthening the value chain deserve higher attention, which I am sure will be a subject of further discussion and deliberations in this important conference as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the conclusion, I would like to renew the commitment of my country to continued support to the efforts of the International community to combat the global hunger and poverty.

Thank you.