

[As delivered]

**Statement by Mr Sikander Hayat Khan Bosan
Federal Minister for National Food Security
and Research of Pakistan
At the 39th Session of the FAO Conference
Rome
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THEME

***“Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and
Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience,
Social Protection and Sustainable
Agricultural Development”.***

**Chairperson,
Mr Director General,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I would like to congratulate you, Chairperson, on your election and that of the members of the Bureau of the 39th Session of the FAO Conference.

Director-General Graziano, we are delighted to congratulate you on your re-election. You have a vision for FAO that has helped it regain the stature and recognition that this knowledge-based organization deserves and for which it was created. We believe that the work you have done in the past four years requires consolidation and needs to be built upon. We continue to support you in this second term. We are proud of FAO staff and the unmatched expertise they bring to the table, especially for developing countries. We wish you, and FAO, all success in achieving the strategic objectives of the Organization.

Chairperson,

The State of World Food Insecurity Report 2015 notes that 795 million people are still undernourished today. This is simply unacceptable. The challenge before us is how to rectify this situation.

SOFI 2015 provides some solutions, which need serious consideration, including:

1. “Inclusive growth” to help fight against hunger and malnutrition.
2. “Social protection” for fostering food security, and reduction of hunger and malnutrition by promoting income security and access to better nutrition, healthcare and education.
3. Trade openness, coupled with effective safeguards and greater policy space for developing countries to avoid detrimental effects of international trade agreements on food security and nutrition.
4. Addressing the root causes of protracted crises resulting from conflict and natural disasters.

SOFI 2015, especially advocates, a holistic approach in which initiatives are taken in multiple sectors such as education, health and social welfare. In principle this is quite correct. In practice, though, we need to recognize that countries have finite resources and allocation of these resources needs to be prioritized. In our experience, a most effective way of establishing priorities is to fully involve and consult with

communities in determine their priorities. Effective and sustainable programmes for food security can best be built if communities are made decision makers on what is important and urgent for them.

Chairperson,

Agriculture forms an important part of Pakistan's economy. Two thirds of our 200 million inhabitants live in rural areas and are associated with Agriculture. For us, FAO's work in the field in Pakistan is of great importance.

Our government is committed to eradicate rural poverty. It is committed to ensure food and nutritional security at all levels.

To effectively achieve this, the Government has launched a Zero Hunger and Family Farming Programme. We look forward to FAO's cooperation in effective implementation of the Programme. Pakistan's Zero Hunger Programme is inspired by the Brazilian model. It intends to reach a total of 61

million people across Pakistan. With a budget of \$1.6 billion, the Programme aims to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity through several interventions. These include stimulus programmes to expand farm outputs and market access, targeted and social safety nets and cash and food transfers to the most food insecure households. Most importantly, the programme would start school feeding projects in 45 most food insecure districts.

In addition the Government has launched a long term economic plan called Vision 2025, which puts people first. Promoting sustainable development, including through modernizing the agriculture sector of the country, is a key element of Vision 2025.

Also in 2008, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was launched. Under the programme, cash transfers are made to families, particularly through women of the households. The effort is to improve food security of families through women and, at the same time to empower women.

Since its inception, the BISP has grown rapidly to become the largest social safety net programme in Pakistan's history benefitting 4.7 million households with annual disbursements expected to reach Rs. 90 billion in the current financial year.

Chairperson,

Despite the progress achieved in agriculture in Pakistan over the last few decades, there is still great potential for increasing the productivity of all our major crops by more intensive use of modern agricultural practices. In this regard, we are making concerted efforts to provide support to the farmers, particularly, smallholders.

We are taking multiple initiatives to break the cycle of rural poverty and hunger. Special focus is being accorded to help farmers to adopt good agricultural practices in order to produce high quality, value-added products which can access export markets. This shall help farmers get higher returns on their produce. We are also focusing on livestock,

dairy, fisheries and poultry development as well as high value horticulture and agro based products.

FAO has helped us by bringing technical knowledge to the field, developing and improving agricultural practices, and supporting policy formulation and implementation. FAO, and the Government of Pakistan, are working to improve agricultural productivity and nutrition for some of the most resource poor populations in the country. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with FAO.

Chairperson,

2015 is a defining year. In September the international community will adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which will set new development goals and targets for the next 15 years. FAO's role will be vital in assisting countries in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, for ensuring food security and nutrition, eradicating extreme poverty as well as for addressing the challenge of Climate Change. These multiple

challenges require action oriented programmes and monitoring by FAO and other UN organizations.

Today a number of countries including Pakistan face the threat of natural disasters, depleting river flows and climate change. This is an area where FAO's cooperation is important for, *inter alia*, building capacities for forecasting, mitigation and building resilience.

In closing I wish Director General Graziano all success in addressing the multiple challenges faced by the international community that are of direct relevance to FAO.

I thank you Chairperson.