

[As delivered]

Statement by H.E. LEE Dong-Phil

Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Republic of Korea

Mr Chairperson,

Mr Director-General of FAO,

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished delegates and representatives of international organizations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to join the 39th Conference of the FAO. First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. José Graziano da Silva with the outcome of the election as the Director General of FAO for the second term. I also wish to welcome and congratulate Honourable Le Mamea Ropati Mualia, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Agriculture Store Corporation of Samoa on his election as the Chairperson of the Conference. I am confident that this Conference will be highly successful under the leadership of the Director General and the Chairperson.

The Republic of Korea highly values the commitment of FAO, its Member States and other relevant international agencies to reduce world hunger

since the 1990s. Despite these efforts, however, about 800 million people are suffering from chronic hunger. Over one billion still remain in extreme poverty. Furthermore, it is alarming that the majority of the poor and hungry are found in rural areas, owing to the gap between urban and rural household incomes.

At this critical juncture, it is timely and significant for the Member Nations to share information on the state of national food and agriculture, and seek opportunities for possible cooperation to break the cycle of rural poverty and hunger by strengthening social protection and production support.

In 2013, the average farmers' income stood at 62.5 percent of that of urban households in Korea, which is expected to further decrease in the future. In addition, the shrinking and ageing rural population raise concerns that rural communities may be left behind.

In order to overcome this situation, PARK Geun-hye administration has been implementing groundbreaking policies to transform agriculture into a leading growth industry from a declining industry, by restoring sustainability and growth capacity of the agricultural and rural sector.

First of all, the Administration is making endeavor to enhance the competitiveness of Korea's agriculture in the global arena. With a view to enhancing agricultural productivity and reducing farm management costs, Korea is promoting the concept of 'Creative Agriculture'. This is a convergence of ICT and agriculture. We are also transforming the

agricultural sector into 'the Six-order Industry' that integrates agricultural production, processing, marketing and rural tourism. This aims to vitalize the agricultural sector and rural communities by increasing rural incomes and job opportunities.

Secondly, Korea is nurturing the agricultural sector as a new growth engine by focusing on exporting agri-food products to the global market, going beyond the domestic market, at every stage - from production to processing, to marketing. Furthermore, we are committed to producing more environment-friendly and higher quality agricultural products, focusing on R&D to strategically develop market-specific products. We also seek more opportunities to promote Korean food tourism and globalize Korean food.

Thirdly, Korea is strengthening social safety net and policy infrastructure of the agricultural and rural sector, while enhancing rural incomes. We are working hard to reduce the instability of farm management and improve income stability by providing direct payments and disaster insurance to farmers. We also provide elderly farmers and smallholders with social insurance, farmland pension and safety insurance along with welfare services such as medical services and farming and household assistance. In addition, to attract and retain youth to rural areas, we are creating an economic-cultural-social centre in each rural community while supporting job training programmes and agri-food business ventures.

Fourthly, the Republic of Korea firmly believes that rural poverty and hunger should be addressed at a global level, rather than at a national or

regional level. In this regard, we actively engage in global debates on food security in relevant international organizations such as G20 and APEC. We also share our experience of implementing agricultural policies and technologies by establishing 'Korea Project on International Agriculture' in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Moreover, we are contributing to addressing vulnerabilities in the food systems of developing states through our cooperative projects with FAO. We will establish the “National Agri-Food Information System” in collaboration with ASEAN+3 Food Security Information System (AFSIS) and provide assistance of about 7.5 million dollars this year for ODA projects on agriculture, forestry and fishery of developing nations.

We believe that the best way to eradicate rural poverty is fostering agriculture as a future leading industry by providing policy support to the agricultural sector and rural communities.

I'd like to reiterate our commitment in providing continuous support for agricultural and rural development and food security around the world. Korea will be always ready to build more cooperative relationship with international organizations such as FAO and with other countries, for example, by sharing experiences for the advancement of the agricultural sector and rural communities.

Once again, it was a great honor for me to have this opportunity to speak at this Conference on behalf of the Korean Government. I would like to thank FAO including Director General Mr. José Graziano da Silva for their wonderful organization of the Conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.