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**THE CONFERENCE OF FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
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Statement in the Plenary by

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**Head of the Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
to the Fortieth Session of the FAO Conference**

Bismillahi Al-Rahman Al-Rahim

Mr. Chairperson of the Conference, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

After the Paris Agreement last October, the topic of “Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security” as the theme of the Fortieth Conference is most significant and opportune.

Mr. Chairperson, Afghanistan’s agriculture is highly impacted by climatic factor. A sudden rise in temperature impacts fruit trees during their flowering stage and thus result in low production. A sudden extreme cold kills small ruminants and impacts negatively the livelihood of many small livestock producers in North and Northeast of the country. Sudden floods deprives rural communities from a good harvest.

Under the optimistic scenario the temperature in Afghanistan is expected to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050 and by 3 degrees Celsius under the pessimistic scenario. Under both scenarios, the growing season will get longer in much of the country. This is an advantageous factor for our agriculture. However, taking advantage of the longer growing season is constrained by the rise in evapo-transpiration due to warmer temperature and more precipitation coming in the form of rain rather than snow and greater prospects of earlier snow melt. High temperature, therefore, will increase the risk of flooding during the spring period and less water availability during the summer months, which is most needed for healthy crops.

In fact, Afghan farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists face two types of droughts. One resulting from below normal winter snowfall and spring rains. The other is

reduced river discharge in the summer months. Snow and rain related droughts can be most severe in northern and central Afghanistan. Reduced river discharge affect most of Afghanistan's 3.2 million hectares that are effectively under irrigation at present. The occurrence of both types of drought reduces the resilience of the rural households.

Crop and livestock production is also affected by the onslaught of floods. Most rural settlement in Afghanistan are concentrated around rivers and small streams and are therefore highly vulnerable to flooding. The intensity of floods is greater in southern and western parts of Afghanistan which are flat and sparsely vegetated. A heavy rainfall and the melting of snow in early Summer can easily turn into flood.

Mr. Chairperson! Environmental mainstreaming is embedded in the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and environmental management is the responsibility of several ministries under the guidance of the National Climate Change Committee. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock takes the lead in land use planning, biodiversity conservation, adaptation measures to climate change covering crops, livestock and forests and for climate adapted irrigation practices.

With climate change, Afghanistan faces many challenges of which the following six are most critical.

One: to improve the level of nutrition of our population, especially of children under 5 years of age and other vulnerable segments of the population, through the diversification of crops and animal products and through an affordable publically administered social safety net. In 2016, forty percent of our population remained food insecure.

Two: to maintain a stable level of food production from irrigated areas by increasing water storage capacity through the construction of small, medium and large dams in all parts of the country. Special attention needs to be given to affordable micro-irrigation technology, especially for ground water use and in rain harvesting.

Three: to accelerate adaptation measures by introducing drought resistance crop varieties, better rotation systems and adjusting the sowing calendar in response to climate change.

Four: to take necessary measures in reducing the negative impact of high temperature on animal productivity, especially of small ruminants that are kept mostly by women, and on the yields of forages and feed crops in family farms.

Five: to prevent tree mortality caused by stress of heat and drought and by outbreaks of pests;

Six: to take measures in preventing the spread of pests, especially migratory pests, associated with changes in temperature, rainfall and wind patterns.

In meeting these challenges, Afghanistan is looking forward to assistance from multilateral and bilateral sources in building the resilience of the communities threatened by climate change, especially from the Rome-based agencies and from the following three Funds:

1. The Green Climate Fund administered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2. The Special Climate Change Fund administered by the General Environment Fund (GEF).
3. The Least Developed Countries Fund also administered by General Environment Fund.

Thank you Chairperson.