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Declaration of
His Excellency Nodar Kereselidze
First Deputy Minister for Agriculture of Georgia
to the
40th session of FAO Conference
Rome, Italy, 3-8 July 2017

Dear Mr Chair,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Honorable Delegates,

it is my pleasure and privilege to represent my country on the 40th session of the FAO Conference.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to FAO for continuous support and dedication for the development of the agricultural sector in Georgia. Agriculture is an important sector in Georgia's economy. Around 43 percent of our total population is employed in the agricultural sector, contributing roughly 9 percent to the country's GDP. There are a number of challenges that Georgia still faces in the agricultural sector, such as fragmentation of agriculture farming lands, small size farm structures, low productivity, and competitiveness.

In order to address these challenges, a number of support programs have been implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia. Let me highlight some of the important programs such as support to agricultural cooperatives, which envisions provision of technical assistance, technical support, and grand schemes to agricultural cooperatives which ensures the increase of productivity of small size farm structures.

Another support scheme that the Ministry is providing to farmers is accessible, affordable finances, which means that concessional agricultural credits are being issued to agricultural farms which makes the accessibility more affordable and easier to agricultural producers.

Another key component is developing an extension system through which we are supporting especially small and medium sized farms to have access to the information on modern technologies, modern agricultural practices, etc.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia implements a number of support programs under the Rural Development Strategy which aims at diversifying economic opportunities in rural areas through supporting non-farm rural partnership, rural tourism, et cetera, that have positive effects on livelihoods in rural areas. Under these strategic goals, inclusion of local actors in the

process is of paramount importance. Local action groups have been established in a number of municipalities where all key stakeholders are represented, like farmers' associations, NGOs, etc., governmental organizations, and jointly these stakeholder groups have a voice in terms of defining policies in rural development.

Climate change is a global challenge which affects the agricultural sector in Georgia as well. The Ministry of Agriculture elaborated Agricultural Development Strategy 2020, which, among other objectives, envisions mitigation and adaptation measures against climate change. Let me highlight some of the key directions under the above-mentioned strategic objective. Firstly, this is rehabilitation of irrigation and drainage systems and introduction of modern drip irrigation systems. Under this objective, more than 100,000 hectares of lands have access to irrigation water already in Georgia with the objective to reach 200,000 hectares by 2020. Under the programs planned for the future, up to 1,000 hectares of agricultural lands are provided with drip irrigation systems.

Another component is strengthening scientific research direction in order to ensure identification and dissemination of varieties of crops that are more resistant to climate change. Awareness program for farmers is another key direction implemented by the Ministry to raise awareness on climate-smart agricultural practices. And this program is also implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and the extension centers that we have under the Ministry.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank again FAO for providing tremendous support to the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia in elaborating good agricultural practices in terms of number of crops which is relevant for Georgia. This information is now disseminated through farmer communities by the means of extension centers. We hope that this cooperation with FAO will give more results in the future while we are now in the process of drafting good agricultural practices guidelines for farmers for up to five, six crops relevant for Georgia.

Thank you very much for your attention.