

[As delivered – checked against English interpretation]

In the Name of God

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hojjati,
the Honorable Minister of Agriculture Jihad of the Islamic Republic of
Iran at the 40th Session of the FAO Conference,
Rome-, 3-8 July, 2017**

**Mr. President,
Dr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director General of the FAO
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished heads of delegations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to attend the 40th FAO Conference on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the outset I would like to appreciate Dr. da Silva and the FAO for organizing this important conference.

Mr. President,

Climate change and its impact on food security are a common concern for all the countries as members of the international community. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as an arid and semi-arid country, is well aware of these concerns, particularly increased occurrence of dust and storms, and to address them in a comprehensive manner, has aligned its agriculture sector strategies with the imperatives of improving the productivity of the production factors, especially water, as well as protecting the resource base for sustainable developments.

Just over the last four years, with the support of modern irrigation systems development policies, about 660,000 hectares of new schemes and modern irrigation systems have been developed across the country.

The Nation's programmes aiming at the conservation of the resource base include, *inter alia*, catchment management schemes, balancing the livestock population to the rangelands carrying capacity, forest protection, and the development of medicinal plants production as an alternative livelihood.

As regards the issue of dust and sand storms at the national level we have initiated extensive measures including the strengthening of the vegetative cover in thousands of hectares in the susceptible regions. However, this issue which is closely related to climate change and has affected the livelihoods of about 1.5 billion people, has a strong global and regional dimension. Hence the need for international cooperation in this area is felt more than ever.

In this regard I am pleased to state that the first high-level international conference on dust and sand storms will be held this week in Tehran with the participation of Ministers and officials from more than 40 countries as well as international organizations.

Support to the development of agriculture and protected spaces is another major policy of the Government to improve water productivity, with an outlook to have 60,000 hectares of greenhouses within a decade, 11,000 hectares of which have already been achieved.

Excellencies,

Another major element of the recent strategies for sustainable agricultural development was improved research and education, coupled with a renovated extension system, which hinges on people's participation as a basis for the dissemination of modern technology and rendering organized support to producers.

These efforts were complemented with the improvement and diversification of the financing and government support mechanisms, resulting in a more favorable financial situation for the farmers. Improving the agriculture marketing systems through establishment of the agricultural commodity stock market and other means has contributed to higher market transparency and a more effective pricing systems for several crops in the recent years.

Distinguished Delegations,

As a result of such measures, the Islamic Republic of Iran has achieved a tangible improvement in the level of its food security. As an indicator, during 2013 to 2016, the total agriculture production increased by 21 million tons, from 97 million tons in 2013 to 118 million tons in 2016. In the same period, the foreign trade deficit improved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Concerning climate change and its challenging impacts on surface waters and ground water resources, I would like to highlight the need to develop and expand the use of appropriate technology for enhancing water productivity, water recycling, water table balancing, the management of regulated waters, and reducing severe evaporation from reservoirs. As a country which has taken various initiatives in these fields, I would like to use this important forum to urge the international community to enhance joint efforts aiming at developing appropriate technologies.

To this end, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Netherland jointly hosted a "Drought Management" Seminar here in Rome on 19 June 2017. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Director-General da Silva and the officials from about 120 countries and international organizations who actively participated in the Seminar. May I renew the commitment of my country to support the international community and countries of the region in order to attain the goals of food security and sustainable agricultural development.

Excellencies,

Thank you very much for your attention.