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**INTERVENTION BY HIS EXCELLENCY MAURIZIO MARTINA MINISTER FOR  
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY POLICY  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY**

**40th SESSION OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION CONFERENCE**

**Proposed theme for the General Debate: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security**

*Rome 3 July 2017*

Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Ministers, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me too to address this 40th Conference of the FAO. As was said this morning by our Prime Minister, Mr Gentiloni, the spirit of cooperation between Italy, FAO, and the other Rome-based Organizations has always been very strong and it has been strengthened in the last few years.

The many initiatives that we have promoted together bear witness to this, starting with the Expo Milan to more sectoral initiatives, for instance the recent agreement that was reached in the area of the traditional agricultural landscapes or others. There were agreements that reached with our Carabinieri police in the area of the environment.

We are convinced that agriculture will continue to have a key role in some of the major present and future challenges that are all closely interconnected and that is why I am very grateful to FAO for having dedicated today's debate to the subject of climate change, agriculture, and food security.

These days, what we are seeing happening in the Mediterranean and in particular in Italy are crucial and working to eliminate hunger has to be shared commitment. There are hundreds of millions of people who do not have access to food and we need concrete responses, useful answers for them in the face of those people who are facing famine, food insecurity, lack of water. It is impossible to just sit back and try to make a distinction between migrants for reasons of warfare or people migrating because they are hungry.

We need a common commitment not only in dealing with emergencies but also in taking decisions here together.

2030 is closer and closer on the horizon and therefore we need to redouble our efforts to really build together as was said by the Secretary-General. We really need to ensure a Zero Hunger scenario. Agriculture is vulnerable. There is the risk of climate change, extreme weather events that are becoming more and more frequent.

We see that temperatures are rising and this has an impact on the availability of water or on the spread of plant and animal diseases, also because of the loss of nutritious elements of different types of food. We also see greater volatility in prices due to conflicts and other factors and all of this undermines the profitability of agriculture and jeopardizes the livelihoods of farmers and the capacity of the sector as a whole to invest and innovate.

In this situation, in this framework, it is crucial that we build resilience in the sector so as to provide more income protection for especially the small and medium size farmers with better policies for risk management in agriculture. More resilient agriculture can also facilitate the contribution of this sector to achieving the sustainable development goals, in particular those relating to food security.

The Zero Hunger objective must necessarily entail more inclusion of smallholders and in particular women and young people. An increasing world population means that we also need to boost food production but we need to do so sustainably.

In the light of climate changes but combining productive needs with the need also to protect the environment, water, soil, flora and fauna without which production is no longer possible.

And it is in this sense that good agricultural practices can give a major contribution, as can the spread of organic agricultural practices. We know quite a lot about it in Italy. We're in a leadership position and we're trying to consolidate it.

Biodiversity and its protection, investments in research and technology are all important.

Another important role is played by extension and technical assistance to farmers and this will become more and more important. It is essential that we empower the farmers, the safe keepers of the landscape and of biodiversity.

For these reasons, we want to put resilience protection of farmers against the risks of climate change at the very top of the Agenda of the Ministers of Agriculture Meeting of the G7 that will be hosted by Italy this year on 14 and 15 October in Bergamo and we want to promote then reflection on how to improve risk management tools which appear to be inadequate everywhere.

This meeting will be also a useful opportunity to think about the commitment of the G7 countries that was reaffirmed in Taormina, the objective to achieve zero hunger targets to promote sustainable agriculture starting from sub-Saharan Africa which is the region with the highest rates of under nutrition, rural poverty, and very heavy migratory flows.

We want to focus on the deep root causes of migrations, considering the close interrelationship between agriculture and migration and quite appropriately the next World Food Day will be dedicated to this theme here in FAO.

Our commitment as the Italian government is to ensure that all of the men and the women of this world see that their right to food is recognized as is their right to life here and everywhere every day of their lives. This is our responsibility. This is the commitment that we wish to undertake and to take forward with the collaboration of all of us in this which is a very strategic era for the future of our planet.

Thank you.