



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE
NETHERLANDS TO THE UN ORGANISATIONS FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE**

**STATEMENT OF MR MARTIJN VAN DAM
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NETHERLANDS**

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Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have prepared a statement just like anyone else today but you hear a lot of statements so let me tell you just a little bit about myself.

I was born in 1978 in Western Europe, in the Netherlands. I don't know what hunger is. My parents don't know what hunger is. Only my grandparents do. They lived during the Second World War. Since the Second World War, Europe managed to produce plenty of food. The question for me is will we continue to do so during my lifetime? Will there be enough food in the world for all of its children when I become a grandfather myself? What can I tell my grandchildren?

Can I tell them later that we solved hunger in the world during my lifetime? Can I tell them that we solved the issues concerning food production for a growing population during my lifetime? We must. That is what today is about.

The question is not only if we can produce enough food. I'm sure we can. We have the technology. We have the technology to do so. But can we do it in a way that our planet can cope with? Can we do it in a way that we can keep producing enough food for decades ahead? That is the real question.

And the tough answer is no, not if we go on like we are doing right now, not if we keep producing as we are producing today, not if we continue to consume food like we, especially in the Western hemisphere, are doing today. We would need another planet where my kids are my age if we continue to go on like this and that is what today is about.

We need to change and we need to do it quickly.

Climate change is not an abstract scientific debate. It is happening today. We see more droughts, more floods, more extreme weather. Now already ice is melting on the poles and on the glaciers. We see desertification where lush forest once grew. I don't have to convince you, I'm sure. We all signed the Paris Agreement and there is only one president in the world who is doubting climate change.

Climate change related issues such as lack of water cause food and job insecurity already today and it contributes to instability and to conflicts. As a consequence, young people flock to cities in increasing numbers, looking for opportunities that aren't there. Then they try to look somewhere else on the globe. Some don't survive the trip to Europe. Some end up in poverty in the streets here in Rome and all of them are leaving behind a depopulated countryside with lesser chances for a food secure future.

So we need to do something and we need to act from today on. We need knowledge and innovation to cope with these challenges and the good news is we can if we work together. The Netherlands is one of the most productive countries in the field of agriculture. We're a small country but still we are the second largest exporter of agricultural goods in the world and we can be that because of the level of knowledge and innovation.

Our agricultural universities, our businesses, our investors, our government, we are very much open for cooperation worldwide, for example, by working together in the global alliance of climate smart agriculture.

During COP 23 in Bonn, FAO and the Netherlands will organize a roundtable together for which you are all warmly invited and working together also means better coordination at the UN level. FAO, IFAD, and the WFP could achieve a unique impact by working together.

I would like to keep it short. I started my statement with this, a long day with a lot of statements. Let us not be daunted by the task ahead or by the

global nature of the challenges. The goals are clear. We stated them in the Sustainable Development Goals. It's not others that will solve it. We cannot leave it to our children. We have to make sure that they can tell our grandchildren that we were the generation that solved the biggest challenges, climate change and food security. We can, we should, and we will if we work together.

Thank you for your attention.