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**STATEMENT FOR THE 40TH FAO CONFERENCE
HELD IN ROME, ITALY**

DELIVERED BY

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

His Excellency, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, Dr
Graziano da Silva,
Chairperson
Honourable Ministers, Heads of Delegations
Excellencies
Representatives of International Organizations
Distinguished Delegates Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour to be part of an august gathering that commemorates the 40th session of the Food and Agriculture Organization Conference. Let me take this opportunity to extend a vote of thanks to the organisers of the Conference and convey my fraternal greetings to the Ministers and the distinguished delegates gathered here today on behalf of the people of the Republic of South Africa. More importantly, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Graziano da Silva for providing sound leadership in managing the affairs of this organization.

The last three years were marked by one of the worst El Nino-induced droughts, which devastated the agricultural sector in a big way in our region. There were job losses as drought intensified, negatively affecting agriculture. The overall unemployment in my country, occasioned by low productivity, led to job losses of up to 27%.

We lost 200 000 livestock, affecting up to a quarter million smallholder farmers. Food prices rose, thus affecting the poorest of the poor, steep food inflation in the basic food basket increased to above 11%, making it extremely

difficult for consumers to afford basic food items. The food basket moderated slightly in the past few weeks, easing pressure on disposable incomes used for food purchases.

Chairperson,

South Africa's response to food insecurity is anchored by a National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNS). The Plan has the high-level strong support of our Presidency. It seeks to strengthen collaboration amongst government Ministers in order to wage a collective response against food insecurity.

As set out in our National Development Plan (NDP), Food and Nutrition Security is identified as a key element to alleviate poverty, reduce unemployment and inequality by 2030. In an attempt to address these fundamental challenges, the Fetsa Tlala Food Production Initiative (end hunger) was introduced. This initiative is in line with the continental policies such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration of Zero Hunger by 2025.

Our approach is complemented by the completion of the State of Food Insecurity (SOFI) Report. On the main, the report outlines the food security challenges at the national level. Furthermore, the report seeks to assess the state of national readiness for South Africa to allocate resources as required. Encouragingly, South Africa has had a zero point six per cent (0.6%) drop in the number of people who are food insecure.

South Africa is undertaking enormous strides in reducing the negative impact of climate change on food security. In this context, we support adoption of a Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Strategic Framework. This framework is geared towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting initiatives

of building resilience of production systems to reduce vulnerabilities of the sector to climate variability and other related risks. We are encouraged by the efforts of the Global Research Alliance (GRA) in this regard. We should all work towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for every unit of food produced.

We are deeply mindful of the collaboration between South Africa and Southern African Development Community Member States in adapting to the effects of climate change. In this regard, the regional organisation has established the South African Vulnerability Assessment Committee (SAVAC). Among others, the committee strives to create a coordinated information system for classifying, measuring and monitoring the pervasive household food insecurity and vulnerability levels.

Part of our working program encompasses the strengthening of collaboration with developed countries to implement the Paris Agreement. Such cooperation should be based on a winning partnership that safeguards food and nutrition security uplifting the poor from unemployment, disease and homelessness. South Africa encourages the establishment of sustainable partnerships within Africa and with other continents and sub-regions to advance the agenda of protecting citizens of the developing world against the effects of climate change, including the progressive realization of the right to food and nutrition security.

To this end, South Africa welcomes the African union joint cooperation initiative with the European Union.

In conclusion, South Africa is confident that the outcomes of this Conference will contribute to long-term sustainable food and agriculture programmes for the benefit of our citizens. We owe it to the less privileged to act in a spirit of

global partnership to ensure a better world for all, eliminating the scars of underdevelopment and raising the hopes of our citizens.

Thank you.