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Statement by the United Nations Environment Programme

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Mr Chairperson, your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates.

The United Nations Environment Programme - also known as UN Environment - welcomes the report on the State of Food and Agriculture with its timely focus on climate change, agriculture and food production.

Given that more than 70 per cent of agricultural production relies on rainfall, increasing climate variability poses an unprecedented challenge to food production systems across the world.

We also welcome FAO's climate change strategy and its guiding principles - not least the promotion of ecosystem-based approaches, and we are pleased that FAO is an active partner in the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. This Coalition brings together 116 partners to showcase how countries can achieve quick wins and multiple benefits for climate and air quality while at the same time improve livelihoods and food security. Many countries are, for example, working through the Coalition on climate-smart paddy rice production – adopting practices like “alternate wetting & drying” that save precious water resources and reduce methane emissions.

Sustainable Food Systems is an emerging and integral part of UN Environment's work and, as I hope you know, we host the Secretariat of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. The Sustainable Food Systems Programme, under this framework, is the perfect vehicle for us to scale up, collaborate and ensure that we increase our collective impact. It is with this in mind that FAO and UN Environment have developed an Interagency Umbrella for Sustainable Food Systems, which will be launched at a side event tomorrow.

As we have heard in the last few days, about one third of all food production world-wide is lost or wasted. In industrialized nations, retailers and consumers discard around 300 million tonnes that is fit for consumption every year. This is more than the total net food production of Sub-Saharan Africa and would be sufficient to feed the estimated 800 million people hungry in the world. This is why FAO and UN

Environment joined forces in 2013 to launch a campaign to reduce food loss called “Think, Eat, Save”.

To help developing countries adapt to climate change, UN Environment and FAO are jointly hosting the secretariat of the UN Climate Resilience Initiative, a multi-stakeholder initiative that strengthens three key capacities for climate resilience: the capacity to anticipate climate hazards through early warning and early action; the capacity to absorb shocks through climate risk insurance and social protection; and the capacity to reshape development pathways to foster climate resilience.

Together with the United Nations Development Programme we are also jointly supporting countries to mitigate climate change through the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in 64 countries as part of the UN-REDD Programme.

To further enhance our many collaborative efforts, UN Environment and FAO established a new cooperation agreement in 2014. It covers four broad areas of work: Sustainable Food Systems; Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity; Data and Statistics; and Legal Instruments and Regulations. We’re having discussions this week to expand this agreement to also cover joint efforts on oceans and on climate change.

Lastly, let me inform you that the next meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly will take place in Nairobi, Kenya on 4 to 6 December this year with a focus on pollution. Given that the 5th of December is World Soils Day, we’d like to invite you and FAO to celebrate this day in Nairobi and to use it to create awareness around the issue of soil pollution and what we all can do to address it so as to secure the foundation for sustainable agriculture and food security for generations to come.

Thank you.