

**Statement delivered by
His Excellency Charles Bastienne
Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture of the Seychelles
on the occasion of the
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Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished Country Representatives,
Excellencies, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

First of all, I would like to congratulate the new Director-General of FAO, Dr Qu Dongyu upon his appointment to this auspicious position. I count on him to deliver on his promises to take the organization to greater heights. Equally, I would like to thank Dr da Silva, the outgoing FAO Director-General, for the great work he has done over the last eight years.

I bring greetings and best wishes of the government and the people of the Seychelles to each and every one meeting here today for a noble, universal cause.

We stand here in solidarity. We seize the opportunities which we are presented with to make a difference to the lives of millions still plagued by hunger and malnutrition. We solemnly pledge to a world without hunger.

We will continue to work in harmony towards the goals of the organisation. A united front is vital to tackle the many challenges which we are confronted with, among them global warming and climate change.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) of the Indian Ocean, we are spared of the miseries of migration of people in search of better lives. We stand alongside those who are faced with such a trauma.

As much as world peace is a major ingredient which underlies the progress of mankind, each member state invariably bears the responsibility of meeting the SGDs to the best of its ability. But the SIDS of the world face huge challenges which are disproportionate to their size. They are highly vulnerable to the many man-made and natural calamities both within and outside their frontiers. These impact strongly on their natural resources.

The natural resources of SIDS such as land, water and qualified human resources are most limited, hindering efforts towards a more appreciable level of food and nutrition security. Obesity and cardio-vascular diseases plague our labour force. External food dependence in excess of 80 percent by weight gives a false sense of security.

Seychelles as a SIDS is nonetheless determined to make a difference in the lives of its people and to meet their aspirations of adequate food and good nutrition.

The launch of a Comprehensive Agriculture Plan in October 2018, does justice to the long CAADP process and the eventual national agricultural investment plan. It crowns further the role of partnership towards meeting the SDGs.

I have set targets to raise national food production for both crops and livestock to meet 50% of national consumption by 2021. Currently, local production averages some 20% of the national consumption level. Progress will come with a helping hand.

I am very appreciative to our organisation for the portfolio of support through the Country Programming Framework 2018-2021, in addressing the many gaps in natural resources management towards a better national food and nutrition security.

On this note, I call on FAO to relook at the current mode by which donor funds are being distributed and used for technical assistance, as I am sure that in many instances technical assistance does not get to fruition and remains as plans, as they do not impact directly on the lives of our people.

I am also thankful to the many international organizations present here today such as the IFAD, the European Union, the Kuwaiti and African Development Banks, SADC and COMESA for their assistance.

I seek the blessing of the one on high to garner our strength and endeavour towards the goals at hand. May we come back in two years time to report on the positive progress that we have made towards meeting the SDGs.

I thank you for your attention.