

*Delivered in Arabic - checked against English interpretation]*

**Statement delivered by  
His Excellency Admad Fateh Al Qaderi  
Minister for Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of the Syrian Arab Republic  
on the occasion of the  
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)  
25 June 2019**

Your Excellency, Chairman of the Conference,  
Excellencies,  
Ministers,  
Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to stand once again at the premises of FAO and participate in the meetings of the General Conference of FAO at the 41<sup>st</sup> session. A 41<sup>st</sup> Session dedicated to discussing food security issues, while staying ready to face challenges and food emergency situations, and finding active responses.

These meetings give us the chance to review the progress achieved in cooperation between the organization and the Member Countries, update the priorities related to food and agriculture under the emergency challenges and find the best practices for rural development, fighting hunger and providing food for everyone.

On this occasion, I would like to thank Dr José Graziano da Silva. I highly appreciate his efforts during his tenure as Director-General of the organization. He was always concerned with our region and worried about achieving the objectives of the organization by implementing several programs which had positive impacts and contributed to the achievement of our joint goals.

We have great hope, and belief in the new management of this organization to be highly responsible and do the best to eradicate poverty and hunger, and go on the same organization track of humanitarian activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our planet witnessed during the last few years big climate changes and successive drought seasons causing lack of water resources, expanding desertification, regression of green cover, and degradation of the whole environment.

To find solutions for these problems, we have as priority to cooperate and coordinate with the organizations and work hard to best benefit from the available resources aiming at achieving our food security, reducing the impacts of the climate changes over agriculture and water through the execution of integrated intervention packages, and sustainable water management to ensure long term good agricultural production and wise adaption to climate change.

Excellencies, members of the Conference,

Syria has achieved great agricultural development reaching innovative results especially in the fields of self-sufficiency, food security, rural women empowerment and others. But unfortunately, the terrorist war and its negative impacts on Syria constrained us and stopped us from achieving the aimed development causing destruction of the whole production system and infrastructure, in research centres, and depriving farmers from agricultural production inputs which were provided free of charge or at subsidized prices. Knowing that the agricultural sector in Syria is a private sector where the majority of lands are small holdings, owned by farmers themselves, nevertheless there are no private institutions providing these

services. Thus, contributing to the rehabilitation of these institutions and centres is the only direct way to improve the livelihood of the affected farmers, help them to have access to their production inputs, assist them to sustain stability, and perform their agricultural activities.

Syria has achieved much facing the challenges imposed by the current situation and unilateral illegal sanctions which caused the increase of production inputs costs and food stuff prices. Today, our country is at the gates of recovery and rebuilding stage. Displaced people have started to return to their villages, this year witnessed the return of about 260 thousand rural families, which is about one million and a half inhabitants in most of the governorates. Most farmers have returned to their villages and this increased the area of cultivated lands, which means that today, more than 800 thousand hectares are cultivated. This puts a bigger responsibility on our shoulders because we need to support those farmers in resilience building efforts and we need to help them resume their agricultural production activities.

The Government is doing its best to benefit farmers. It provides its support and considers farming as one of the main areas on which to focus. I would like, ladies and gentlemen, to salute the efforts of FAO and particularly the country office in Damascus. In the past few years, you and FAO have contributed to a great many projects and have guaranteed a leap in the Syrian agricultural field. You have contributed in bringing farmers back to their farms and villages. We have been able to see the impact of your projects on poor farmers in Syria. Also, I would like to thank all donors who contributed to financing of those projects.

Last but not least, I would hope for the activities of this Conference to be crowned with success and I would hope for the decisions of this Conference to be translated into positive impacts on the world at large. I would hope under the new management to see better collaboration with Syria through activities, projects and assistance so that the agricultural sector in Syria can thrive and that rural societies can be empowered, especially that rural women have a better status. We would hope for irrigation projects to be supported and we would hope as well for assistance to help ensure stability for farmers at large, for production to resume and for livelihoods to become better.

Thank you.