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**Statement delivered by
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Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to FAO
on the occasion of the
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)
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Thank you and good morning everyone.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the United Nations and a committed Member of FAO.

I would like to start by thanking the outgoing Director-General José Graziano da Silva and wish him well for his next move.

Four years on from our joint commitment to the Global Goals, progress against SDG2 to end hunger is becoming even harder to achieve. More than 820 million people in the world are hungry today. We have a huge challenge to end hunger in the next ten years.

More than ever, the world needs FAO. Climate change threatens to drive the number of hungry people even higher, as water scarcity, droughts, floods, pests and diseases reduce productivity, and particularly in Africa and Asia where the poorest rely heavily on farming to feed their families and earn their incomes.

FAO plays a critical role in fostering the international collaboration required to respond to these threats. Antimicrobial resistance is a pressing example of a cross-border threat that cannot be handled by countries working alone. Without international rules and action to reduce the use of antibiotics and maintain agricultural productivity, antibiotics will stop working. Developing countries will be the most adversely affected.

Now is an ideal time for FAO to recommit itself to prioritising global public goods that benefit all countries. This global approach is where some of the organisation's greatest achievements to date have taken place, like eradicating rinderpest. It is this collaboration which is needed to meet the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The world needs an FAO that is fit-for-purpose. A FAO that is modern, open, and transparently managed. Where Member States are partners in governing bodies that support the Organisation in delivering results. An Organisation that holds itself to account.

We congratulate the newly elected Director-General Qu Dongyu and look forward to working closely with him and all other Member States to ensure that FAO fulfils its mandate and steps up to provide the global leadership in the international system that is so urgently needed.

That is leadership in partnership with others. We need the UN system to be more than the sum of its parts. As the UN Secretary General has said, the 2030 Agenda requires bold changes to the UN Development System (UNDS). We call on FAO to step up its engagement, particularly in the new generation of country teams, centred on UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that support national priorities to achieve inclusive economic development.

The State of Food and Agriculture report on “Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development” is the theme of this Conference. The report highlights the challenges and the opportunities that rural migration presents and how migration makes an important contribution to economic and social development.

With the right policies, for example, the remittances that migrants send can promote investment. The flows are enormous: between 2015 and 2030, USD6.5 trillion in remittances will be sent to low and middle-income countries. The UK is committed to facilitating these private flows to be spent productively by making the process cheaper, more accessible and more secure.

Remittances are a crucial source of capital for developing countries. Remittance flows are also often a stable source of finance because they are less affected by the global economy. Sub-Saharan Africa received approximately USD34.4 billion in remittances in 2016 from outside the continent. A further USD14.9 billion flowed between countries in the region. Approximately USD5.3 billion was sent from the UK.

We encourage FAO members to support the development of policies that facilitate this.

This Conference will also approve FAO’s Programme of Work and Budget for the 2020 to 2021 biennium. We welcome a focus on FAO’s unique comparative advantages, including: combatting antimicrobial resistance (AMR); supporting countries in dealing with transboundary diseases and pests, such as Fall Armyworm; and providing technical assistance on food safety standards.

The UK will continue to encourage FAO to achieve the organisational excellence needed to maximise impact in contributing towards our shared goal of a world with zero hunger.

I will conclude this statement by assuring Conference that the UK will continue to be one of FAO’s strongest supporters of reform. We look forward to working with the new Director-General and other members and FAO’s new leadership as FAO steps up to meet the increasing global challenges to delivering the Global Goals and leaving no-one behind.

Thank-you.