Excellency,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this event, host by FAO and organized in collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of the Netherlands to discuss around one of the most devastating natural hazard of our days: drought and its impacts on agriculture.

My name is Johannes Petrus Hoogeveen. I am the FAO Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and also your MC for this event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Graziano da Silva for having accepted the proposal that my country and the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted to FAO to co-organize a seminar on Drought and Agriculture. And, on this occasion, also to celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, which takes place every year on 17 June since the UN General Assembly declared it in 1994.

We believe this event and the contributions that will be presented today can mark a significant step towards innovative approaches to drought planning and management. Our goal indeed is to highlight the importance of moving from an “emergency response” model, which is still prevalent in many places around the world, to a proactive and integrated approach. “What can we do differently?” is the question we will ask ourselves, to analyze what has been done until now and how we can improve. We firmly believe a more efficient and integrated management of land and water resources would have significant impacts in terms of increased agricultural production. We should therefore intensify our efforts to ensure a growing number of countries include mitigation and early warning actions in their national policies, to enhance resilience when facing changes due to climate variability. We hope this event today will prove helpful in promoting new partnerships and, in this way, in addressing the challenges in front of us in the most efficient way.

Our event will be conducted in two segments: a high-level segment, which will start in a moment, and a technical segment, which will follow the coffee break and will start by a short video.

It is my pleasure now to invite Mr. Seyed Mohammad Hossein SHARIATMADAR, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for his introductory statement.