HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOENERGY

Committee of the Whole: Agenda Item 5.3

Roundtable 3: Transboundary Pests and Diseases

Wednesday, 4 June 2008

Co-Chairs Report

The Roundtable was opened by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, His Excellency Henri Djombo, Minister of Forest Economy, Republic of Congo. The Co-Chairs were His Excellency Sharad Pawar, Minister for Union Minister for Agriculture and Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (India) and His Excellency Jim Atherton, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Biosecurity (New Zealand). The panellists were Mr Hans R. Herren, President, Millennium Institute, Co-chair of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) and World Food Prize laureate, Mr Declan O'Brien, Managing Director, International Federation for Animal Health and Mr M. Taghi Farvar, World Conservation Union (IUCN) Governing Council Member, Chair of IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy. Mr. James Butler, Officer-in-Charge of the FAO Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department, acted as Secretary.

Panellists and discussions from the floor reflected on the following questions:

1. Which are the impacts of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases on the food security situation of different groups of people and regions? Which are the more vulnerable groups and systems, whose exposure to transboundary diseases and pests carries the highest risks?
2. Which short- and medium- term actions should be taken by the international, national and local communities to address these risks and prepare to respond to emergencies arising from transboundary diseases and pests?
3. Which national policy and legislation reforms are needed to reduce the impacts of transboundary plant and animal pests and diseases including threats to forests and fishery?
4. Which global data exchange systems and research activities will be necessary in the future to identify and quantify connections among climate change, ecosystems, and the transmission of disease agents and the resulting potential threats to food security?

The co-chairs made short introductory statements that emphasized the need for regional and international collaboration to strengthen national and regional biosecurity systems to ensure safer trade and meet such threats as highly pathogenic avian influenza, UG99 stem rust and EUS fish disease, which all are likely to be affected by climate change. The developing countries and those with economy in transition would be required to canalise more resources to build capacity in terms of infrastructure, diagnostics and expertise to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change on transboundary movement of pests and diseases. Developed and

technologically advanced countries would have to come forward in this endeavour with greater scientific leadership through knowledge initiative programmes.

Mr. Hans Herren noted the growing pressure from transboundary pests and diseases due to globalization, trade and traffic, as exacerbated by climate change. He emphasized the need to achieve sustainable production intensification, for local and national ecosystem-based strategies, as called for by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, without overusing chemical inputs. Mr. Declan O'Brien referred to the FAO and OIE Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases as an ideal approach that, with commitment by researchers and broad stakeholder alliances to robust tools and vaccines, should be operationalized through mechanisms such as the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health. Mr. Taghi Farvar stressed valuing local knowledge of local ecosystems and customary institutions for better pest and disease early warning systems, the need to build their capacity as part of food sovereignty, the importance for environmental resilience, and cautioned against large scale campaigns on transboundary pests that undervalued these important resources.

The Roundtable agreed that transboundary pests and diseases were significant threats to food security, and that top priority should be given to strengthening early warning and rapid response systems. It also agreed that regional, national and local capacity building was crucial in preparing countries better to meet these challenges. There was broad support for encouraging the evolution towards greater cooperation among national systems, especially through strengthening existing international platforms including those provided by FAO (International Plant Protection Convention) and OIE.

Wider use of vaccination as a preventive measure was proposed, while acknowledging the need to explore the regulatory implications. Genomics, biotechnology, and information technology were cited as examples of tools that could be more widely applied. It was also stressed that rather than creating new platforms, the FAO's platform be strengthened. The importance of enhancing the roles of biodiversity and local knowledge and communication in the management of existing, as well as emerging, pests and diseases was stressed. The role of strong national systems in facilitating regional consultations in collaboration with FAO was also noted.