

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Armenia is a mountainous country. 77% of its territory is located between 1000-2500 meters above sea level. Armenia is characterized by its relatively scarce land and water resources as well as by its high risk agricultural operations due to an elevated probability of different emergency occurrences (frost, hail, floods, land slides and droughts). The solution of the food security issue in the country is hindered also by the forecasted global climate change and increasingly the strengthening manifestations of the phenomenon. Having ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1993, and the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention in 1992, Armenia has taken measures to reduce greenhouse gases emission, to mitigate negative consequences and to strengthen its cooperation with the international community in this field. However, Armenia's agriculture is rather diversified and comprises well developed livestock and plant production. Recent data reveal that agriculture represents 20% of Armenia's GDP. This creates necessary preconditions for the gradual increase of food security levels in the country. Food security is one of the priorities for the country's economic policy and is being monitored in the light of the recent increases in food prices. It takes into account forecasted increases in global food prices since Armenia depends on imports of a number of vitally important staple foods, such as vegetable oils, sugar, grain crops. Therefore, increases in international food prices constitutes serious challenges, which could be overcome only by joint efforts of the international community and member states, and the enhancement of regional cooperation through the implementation of joint projects. To address increases in the international food prices and global climate changes, some of the measures taken at the national level include the "2008-2012 National Programme for agricultural development and increase in self-sufficiency of the main food products in the Republic of Armenia", the main objective of which is to promote conditions to have access to food, which is in line with established public health norms targeting the effective use of financial, labor, material-technical, natural and other resources.

In this regard, efforts have been made to strengthen Armenia's standing in the field of international trade, taking into account the export potential for relative competitive advantages of fresh fruits, vegetables, potatoes, grapes and processed products, as well as, meat and dairy and other products of animal origin.

Regarding sustainable agricultural development, both in Armenia and in many other dry zone countries, based on existing challenges, special importance is given to irrigation issues. More than 70% of products of vegetable origin is received from irrigated land areas. In addition, much importance is attached to the improvement of industrial infrastructure activities (roads, transport, communication, and energy), the increase in land fertility, desertification control, effective application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures without which significant risks are taken. This prevents animal diseases and damage to crops. In this regard, specific importance is attached to the spread of transboundary diseases and to the application of their diagnostic and prevention measures, which is effective only when a close regional cooperation is ensured.

Since 2003, after its WTO accession, Armenia has been guided by the requirements of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement, harmonizing national legislation with the international standards in the field of food safety, veterinary issues, and plant protection. In addition to the improvement of the legal and legislative framework, necessary measures are also taken in connection with the formation of institutional establishments, the strengthening of the state supervision in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and focusing on cooperation with relevant organizations such as FAO, OIE, UPOV. The prevention of the spread

of infectious pests and animal and crops diseases, and the application of quarantine measures is the preferred policy. It is being developed and implemented in the agrarian sector of the Republic of Armenia, which together with other factors, is considered to be a good tool to increase its market competitiveness.

One of the serious challenges is also the rapid increase in energy prices, which has both direct and indirect severe negative impacts, resulting, in particular, to the increase in food prices and, on the other hand, to the necessity of obtaining alternative energy resources. Among them, stands out, the generation of bio-fuel from crops, which is being widely recognized in a number of countries, decreasing, particularly, the supply of a series of grain and technical crops.

In order to effectively face the above-mentioned challenges, in Armenia, measures are taken to suppress food prices, the most effective of which is the promotion of local production and the replacement of a number of imported food products with local production, taking into account the local market capacity. Together with the afore-mentioned is the expansion of bio-gas generation from re-processed agricultural waste.

The mitigation of the afore-mentioned economic and environmental challenges requires an effective coordination, improved management of risks, as well as, a unified policy developed and implemented by all member countries.

We greatly appreciate the continuous and significant assistance provided by different UN Agencies, in particular, by FAO, UNDP, IFAD and the World Bank, as well as the EU and other organizations of the Donor community, in achieving sustainable development and environmental related issues in the agrarian sector of Armenia.

We believe that this Summit should culminate with a decent Declaration arrived at by consensus, reflecting Member Countries' sincere wishes to help humanity in its strive to take on the challenges facing us.

The European Regional Group will hold its FAO Regional Conference in our capital, Yerevan, in 2010. I believe that one major agenda item will cover the progress made for achieving the commitments of this Declaration.