

**Check against delivery.**

**Keynote speech  
of the Director General  
of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry,  
Environment and Water Management  
*Edith Klauser, AUSTRIA***

Mr Chairman,

Dear Director-General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all I would like to convey to you the sincere wishes of Minister Pröll for a successful outcome of this high level Conference and his apologizes for the absence at this very important Conference. I also would like to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, as well as to the Vice Chairmen of this Conference, my congratulations on your election.
2. At the same time, I would like to thank FAO and the cooperating organizations IFAD, WFP and Bioversity International for having called this conference. It has been organised just in the nick of time, as currently more than 850 million hungry people urgently need food aid and assistance and as the existing problem of world hunger has become even more prevalent in the last 10 weeks, given the soaring food prices as well as the food-shortage that we have been witnessing since 2007.
3. It seems evident to me, that the current crisis has drastically highlighted the very fragility of the world's food systems and moreover their vulnerability to sudden shocks: sadly enough, the crisis mostly strikes the already very poor and hungry, and among of these I would like to emphasize in particular the very dire situation of small scale farmers, women and children.
4. We all are deeply concerned by the global situation and the impact of soaring food prices on world's hunger and poverty: we are all aware of the contributing factors to this problem. There is an urgent need to tackle this situation in order to achieve the Millenium Development Goals and in particular Goal 1, namely to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The present situation and the effects

of increased prices have had a negative impact on the small progress which had been achieved until now. This Conference provides a unique opportunity for the international community to tackle the challenges as well as the opportunities posed by Food Security, Bioenergy and Climate Change.

5. We support the proposal that immediate and short-term measures are necessary to assist the most vulnerable countries and populations affected by high food prices. We are also convinced that, in the medium to longer term, a lasting answer to the current crisis requires coordinated actions from the international community, with a view to strengthening agricultural capacities and rural development, in order to meet a growing demand.
6. In order to get back to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the aims of the World Food Summit, it is of outmost importance to take into account the aspects of adequate food production, sustainable food security and the right to food within all international agreements and *fora*. In particular in the least developed countries the urgent improvement of an adequate supply requires increased investments in agricultural, rural development and agricultural research..
7. Sustainable agriculture production neglected in the past years can contribute in a positive way to mitigating the impacts of climate change while contributing to increase the livelihood of million of small farmers in rural areas.
8. Indeed the problems we are currently facing are seemingly insurmountable, because they are universal ones; however, due to different conditions in different parts of the world, the causes, and thus the solutions, vary from region to region. For instance, the challenge posed by the increased production of biofuel seems to be an adequate example of this view: despite its possible challenges, biofuel certainly offers social and environmental benefits if its production remains compatible with social and environmental standards; namely respecting existing land rights and, in particular, the priority of food security and is produced in a sustainable manner. It is therefore paramount to consider solving these problems by taking into account regional needs.
9. In this regard I would like to mention that the EU is actually elaborating sustainability criteria for the production of biofuels.

10. International organizations, such as FAO, WFP, and other relevant international partners can contribute to alleviating and mitigating the actual growing food insecurity and are urged to work in a coherent and coordinated manner to take actions against the current crisis. We welcome the set up of the task force and are looking forward to the “comprehensive framework for action” which should pave the way forward. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the UN Reform process continues and in particular that the ongoing reform process of FAO supported by its member states be successful.

11. Together with its partners of the European Union and all partners in the world, Austria is convinced that a common procedure and sustainable solution must be found to face the actual crisis and combat hunger. Austria is committed to helping solve the food crisis and to continue cooperating within the international network; and will consider contributing to the recent appeal launched by the Director General once details will be available.

12. Convinced, that all our efforts and the steps for immediate and quick help should assist the further preparation for medium and long-term strategies, I am looking forward to a very productive and sustainable outcome of this Conference, hopefully culminating in an auspicious high-level declaration.

Thank you for your attention!