

**Statement by the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources
and Environment of the Republic of Cyprus
Mr. Michalis Polyniki Charalambides
to the High Level Conference on Food Security:
The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy
Rome, 3-5 June 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like first of all to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization for organizing the present High Level Conference and for the preparation of the informative documents which will facilitate the discussion on the important issues relating to the implications of climate change and the new energy situation for agriculture and food security.

The world is presently facing new challenges in feeding the growing population, arising from climate change, production of biofuels and consequent rise in food prices.

According to available information, food prices have reached their highest level in thirty years causing several problems in many developing countries. It is, unfortunately, widely accepted that these high food prices are here to stay for a long period. Pessimist are even predicting that food prices will increase even further, worsening the already unacceptable level of food deprivation suffered by more than 850 million people.

It is obvious that the international community cannot remain indifferent in such a situation. We believe that the immediate objective must be to significantly reduce the negative effects of the food price rises on the poorest consumers in developing countries, while at the same time encouraging a positive supply response from farmers in the poorest countries.

With reference to Climate Change as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, it is “very likely” that increases in the man-made emissions of greenhouse gas caused most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the middle of the 20th Century. Noticeable human influences now extend to other aspects of climate, including: ocean warming; continental-average temperatures; temperature extremes; and wind patterns.

The impacts of climate change are expected to intensify in line with the rise in the average global temperature. As the temperature rises, the capacity of ecosystems to support human-kind decreases. Furthermore, the cost of adapting to this change will increase with increasing temperature. Adaptation strategies and measures can be applied globally, regardless the financial status of a party. Important, however, is for the strategies to be developed regionally in areas of similar characteristics.

We are particularly concerned about the disproportionate impact that climate change will have on the most vulnerable developing countries. We therefore believe that international response to climate change needs to be focused on adaptation, especially in what concerns particularly vulnerable developing countries. The poor and most vulnerable will be the most affected due to their higher dependence on natural resources and their limited to non-existent ability to deal with and adapt to some of the predicted consequences. Climate change and adaptation should thus be integrated into strategies for poverty reduction, and development planning and budgeting to support the poorest of the world. The potentials of adaptation and its actual costs still remain unclear, since the effective instruments strongly depend on the specific geographical climate risk factors and on the policy for the environment in each country.

Adaptation is a necessity and needs to be urgently integrated into public and private investments and to be adequately financed through the further development of innovative financing and risk management instruments.

We strongly believe that forests are a good “tool” that should be utilized to the maximum, for the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions. In this respect every effort should be made towards the protection of the forest and the expansion of them where it is possible. Efforts must be made to avoid deforestation, improve forest conservation and management and implement policies relating to agro forestry for food energy, land restoration and generally policies that lead to conserve soil and water resources.

Adaptation and mitigation in agriculture, needs to focus on water management, research on the impact that climate change is going to have on the existing crops and research on the new crops that can replace the existing ones under the new emerging climate condition. Focus should be on those mitigation and adaptation measures which have positive effects on food security, rural incomes, environmental services and low carbon footprint. The effort must be joined and coordinated between as many countries as possible.

Thank you.