

Statement of the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic

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High Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change
and Bioenergy (Rome 3-5th June 2008)

Mr. Chairman, Excellences,...

Let me first of all thank the Director-General of FAO Dr. Jacques Diouf for organizing this Conference which is of paramount importance in the current situation.

Many speakers have talked about causes of rising food prices and I am not going to repeat now the notoriously known facts once again. Instead, let me say few words about what the Czech Republic believes to be possible ways to improve food security.

The Czech Republic calls for the conclusion of the WTO/DDA multilateral negotiations and for more attention and incentives to be given to the agriculture development cooperation. Support to agricultural and environmental activities means in fact investments into rural development, transfer of technologies and extension of services. We are of the opinion that there is time and room for the developed countries to remove the protectionist measures represented by high duties and interventions. Obstacles for trade with basic food and foodstuffs deserve to be lifted. This is also the aim of the measures proposed by the EC in the framework of the CAP Health Check which the Czech Republic welcomes as a liberal-minded reform.

Attention should be also paid to energy consumption control and to a reasonable biofuels policy including accelerated production of second generation of biofuels. An element not to be overseen as possible remedy to the current problems concerning food supply is the utilization of GMOs.

I would like to mention here the new Common Agriculture Policy orientation which the Czech Republic fully supports. New measures will enable the EU farmers to react quickly and in an adequate way to the growing demand on world and local food markets. Strong EU development funds oriented namely into the agricultural sector of the developing countries where their aim would be to support local self-sufficient and sustainable agriculture might help to cope with the food crisis in the poorest world regions.

The Czech Republic gives a lot of attention to the development assistance and humanitarian aid. We are regular donor to many multilateral organizations including FAO and WFP. The Czech Republic is not a country with a big agricultural production still it has fairly good knowledge of agricultural, forestry, veterinary, phytosanitary and hydrological sciences and technologies. These we offer for help to number of developing countries. As example Angola, Zambia, Kenya and Ethiopia can be mentioned.

The challenge of food crisis is one more reason for the FAO to transform itself in line with the facts found by the independent external evaluation of last year. The FAO has a chance to become an organization which will help developing countries to build their agricultural sectors following local possibilities and circumstances and coping with local imminent needs and interests. This is also a chance and a challenge for the FAO regional offices with their better local orientation in the agricultural sectors of individual developing countries to identify precisely and accurately the actual need and content of development cooperation there.

At the end of my short intervention let me wish the FAO good luck for the accomplishing of new challenges.