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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to express the gratitude of my delegation to FAO, and the Italian Government, for hosting this Summit and for the warm hospitality that has been accorded to us during our stay in this historic city.

The gravity of the global food crisis on the offing is too obvious to merit emphasis. And that is why it has augmented, *more than ever before*, the imperative and urgency of an effective and collective global response. This is rightly so. Because, those who will be affected most by the current food crisis are those who have already been deprived, and this is especially true in Africa, of other necessities of life. To leave them to mend for themselves will be morally reprehensible and politically imprudent. In the event, the timing of this Summit could not have been more propitious.

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But timely and critical as this Summit is, we must recognize from the outset its potential downsides. In this respect, we must ensure that the heightened global attention does not become ephemeral. We must ensure that the spotlight is maintained in its present intensity and not eclipsed, as is often the case, by other priorities in the months to come. This will be vital to ensure sustained action and follow-up.

The other related pitfall is a disproportionate focus on short-term palliatives to mitigate the current emergency at the expense of long-term and more viable measures. We must also be careful not to nurture, albeit inadvertently, crippling structural dependence in beneficiary countries and communities.

The integrated measures recommended in the Final Declaration are otherwise ongoing programmes of national and household food security that most of our countries have already enunciated long before the onset of this crisis.

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In the case of Eritrea, for instance, the rolling, five-year, programme of food security that we have launched in 2005 is anchored on the following seven pillars:

- Nation-wide introduction of an efficient water harvesting and management system;
- Transformation and modernization of a largely rain-fed agricultural system into pressurized irrigation;
- Development of the complimentary fisheries sector;
- Income supplement for small scale farmers through enhancement of an integrated production of backyard poultry; cattle raising; and, honey production;
- Public investment in the associated infrastructure of roads; agro-industrial plants; storage facilities and market outlets;
- Adjustment of the land tenure system through appropriate public sensitization programmes;
- Selected focus on high-yield cash crops.

While these programmes are long-term in nature and aimed at incrementally increasing integrated food production, the Government has already established an inter-Ministerial

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Task Force to monitor forecasted climatic conditions this year and to pro-actively take all necessary measures to combat and mitigate potential crop shortfall.

In the context of these realities, it is gratifying to witness today heightened international goodwill, solidarity and determination for collective global action to seek enduring remedies to tackle the problem. We hope that today's vibrant sense of collective well-being will lay to rest unhealthy practices of the past that literally and wrongly politicized emergency assistance. Many times in the recent past, our willful focus on long-term measures to stem structural dependence were scoffed at. Requests for inputs that ensure sustainable production turned down in favour of immediate hand-outs. Even well-thought out monetization programmes of food assistance were misconstrued as undermining the WFP's food-aid policy to entail penalties for insightful measures that should have been appreciated.

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At any rate, there is no point in harking back to the past. The attitudes and programmes spelt out in the Rome Declaration are noble indeed and let us all join hands to ensure their success.

I thank you.