

**Country Statement to be delivered by H. E. Major General
Htay Oo, Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Myanmar
at the High Level Conference on World Food Security: the
Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy,
Rome, Italy, 3-5 June 2008**

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**On behalf of the Myanmar delegation and on my own
behalf, may I extend my warmest congratulations to
His Excellency Mr. Silvio Berlusconi on his unanimous
election as the Chairman of this august conference. I also
wish to place on record our appreciation to Dr. Jacques
Diouf, the Director-General of FAO for his tireless efforts
and devotion towards the successful convening of this
High Level Conference.**

Mr. Chairman,

**In an unprecedented shift, the world cereals reserves
are depleting and food supply is dwindling rapidly and
food prices are soaring to historic levels. Population
growth, economic progress, climate change, biofuels,
fossil fuel prices, and neglecting crop research are major
factors contributing toward increase in global food prices.
Already unusual weather events linked to climate change
have decreased production in major exporting countries.**

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar no longer is spared by the phenomena of the climate change and has recently experienced one of the worst natural disasters in its history. Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2nd and 3rd May 2008, sweeping through the Ayeyarwaddy delta region and some townships in Yangon Division including Yangon City with winds up to 200 km per hour. Altogether, almost 7.1 million people were affected.

A total area of (783000) ha. including (543000) ha. of paddy land were inundated with sea water due to high tidal waves of 4 meters. Embankments with the total length of (1014) km, protecting paddy land from tide along the coastal areas were largely breached and about (218000) ha. of paddy land may not be able to plant normally in the coming monsoon season. It would cause significant reduction of rice productivity in the affected areas.

The Government, people and the armed forces of Myanmar are doing their utmost in carrying out emergency relief and recovering agricultural production in disaster areas. UN organizations particularly FAO, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, ASEAN, INGOs and global and regional communities are immediately responding to our needs and generously extending their assistance for the relief and recovery in the aftermath of cyclone Nargis. By getting

together in the 'Pledging Conference' held in Yangon on the 25th of May, under the tripartite arrangement of the Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and United Nations, the world community has expressed their solidarity with Myanmar people in the ordeal. The presence of Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations confirms this determination.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who shared their condolences and sympathy with us. I would like to invite the global community to join hands with us in the true humanitarian spirit to rehabilitate the devastated areas and to increase food production.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government is making great efforts not only to ensure sufficiency of rice for the country's population of 57.65 million people but also to share the surplus with needy countries. In 2007-2008 season, over (8.1) million hectares of paddy were cultivated producing over (31.5) million metric tons. With the consumption of a little over (19.8) million metric tons at the rate of 206 kg per person per annum, Myanmar has the total surplus of (11.7) million metric tons of paddy equivalent to about (7) million metric tons of milled rice.

Myanmar still has large potential to vertically as well as horizontally expand its rice production within a short period of time if the required inputs, particularly fertilizer are provided. Measures should be taken to increase production of rice in Myanmar to reach its potential in other unaffected areas of the country in order to contribute toward world food security.

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar is not the first and sadly may not be the last to face such a catastrophic natural calamities. While Myanmar is increasing agricultural productivity to ensure food security, it is also paying attention to energy security especially in rural areas. Fortunately, Myanmar still has 6 million hectares of arable land yet to be utilized and rich water resources. Therefore, without any trade-off between food and biofuel, Myanmar still has plenty of space to expand biofuel crops production.

Jatropha cultivation plan with the target area of 3.2 million ha. has been launched to produce biodiesel with the main objective of fulfilling rural energy self-sufficiency. It will make marginal land more productive and as well enhance income generation and employment diversification in the rural areas, ultimately contributing towards food security. Private sector is also encouraged to

establish sugarcane and cassava based bio-ethanol industries in Myanmar.

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar is prepared to fully cooperate with other FAO member countries and the world community as a whole, to mitigate the impacts of climate change and its adverse effects on food security at all levels. We firmly believed that thorough assessment and analysis of the issues and associated problems are essential for all of us to enjoy sustainable food, feed, and fuel production system contributing to mitigation of climate change. I am fully confident that the outcome of this high level conference timely organized by FAO will enlighten us to resolve the urgent issues and to set a common frame work in tackling the challenges of climate change and bioenergy.

Thank you.