

NAME OF THE COUNTRY: MALAYSIA

**NAME OF THE SPEAKER: H.E. DATO' MUSTAPA MOHAMED
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-
BASED INDUSTRY, MALAYSIA**

**High Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate
Change and Bioenergy, Rome,
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MALAYSIA'S COUNTRY STATEMENT

**Delivered by: H.E. Dato' Mustapa bin Mohamed
Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, Malaysia**

Mr. Chairman
Director-General of FAO
Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, allow me to convey my warmest greetings on behalf of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. My delegation and I are greatly honored and privileged to be invited to this High Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

2. The current global scenario underscores the increasing importance of food security, given recent and ongoing challenges experienced worldwide in the form of food shortages, and dramatic increases in food prices. This situation is further aggravated by projections of continued high food prices in the short

and medium term. The rise in food prices has been linked to many causes but two of the most often cited factors have been climate change, and the spillover effects from bio-energy generation. In this respect, I applaud the wisdom of the FAO in convening this Conference to focus on addressing food security issues holistically, as these two factors and many others as well, have become increasingly intertwined.

3. Food security goals cannot be achieved without an increase in agricultural productivity and production capacity. Food security initiatives should therefore focus on creating a renewed interest in agricultural development to ensure growing demand for food supplies. In this age of the knowledge economy, it is sometimes possible to lose sight of this basic yet critical sector of the economy, especially when alluring opportunities present themselves in the services, manufacturing and technology sectors.
4. Due attention should also be paid to the delicate balance required between domestic production of food products, versus the import of such items. Indeed, in many cases, geographical considerations restrict or even prevent the ability for a given country to produce certain required food products. The outright removal of imports is clearly impossible, however, sound strategies must be developed to mitigate the risks of over-dependency on imports. These will stand a country in good stead, should a situation arise where exporters of a given item find difficulty in providing regular supplies.
5. Malaysia has initiated measures to increase its domestic supply of food, especially for rice, through greater investments in agricultural infrastructure, pest and disease control, the use of high-quality seeds, as well as the judicious use of agriculture inputs. Idle land has been identified and earmarked for food production. In addition, an active direct marketing program driven through an extensive network of Farmers Markets has been implemented, to link farmers and consumers. We are also launching a program to encourage households to supplement their produce requirements

by growing their own food, leveraging on the concepts of 'kitchen gardens' and 'edible landscapes'.

Mr. Chairman,

6. A cause of increasing concern given its perceived negative impact on food security is the rapid increase of bio-fuel production derived from food crops. Seven years ago there were only 1 million hectares of land utilized for the growing of crops in bio-fuel production. Today, 25 million hectares of land producing approximately 100 million tonnes of food crops are being used annually for the production of biofuel. We can expect more food crops to be converted into biofuel as oil prices continue to spiral upwards. It is indeed disconcerting that while some 820 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnourishment, such an increasingly large quantity of food crops are being converted annually into biofuel.
7. We would like to propose that further analysis on the effects of biofuel production on food security be carried out to assist countries develop the necessary policies that balance the utilization of scarce resources for food and biofuel production. A prudent strategy to adopt may include the use of cellulosic biomass for biofuel production rather than the utilization of food crops. Currently some palm oil mills in Malaysia are already utilizing waste fibers and shell residues from its milling process as fuel to produce energy. However more research should be undertaken to promote the efficient conversion of cellulosic biomass into biofuel.
8. Finally, I wish to touch on climate change that influence the frequency and intensity of extreme weather, and has been seen to adversely impact food security. Changes in temperature and rainfall have also increased the susceptibility of agriculture to pests and diseases. Indeed climate change affects agriculture more significantly than any other economic sector.

9. In promoting agriculture and food production, Malaysia's strategy is to foster sustainable agriculture and to adapt agricultural practices to reduce the adverse economic impact arising from climate change. Key strategies include adapting breeding technologies, timing of agricultural operations to leverage prevailing weather conditions, risk management techniques, irrigation infrastructure and efficient water management.

10. However, like most developing countries and countries in transition, Malaysia lacks the resources and technological expertise to address effectively the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture. Malaysia urges developed countries to take concerted efforts to transfer technology on climate change mitigation or adaptation measures to alleviate the negative effects of climate change in developing countries. In this area, we call on the international community to accelerate its support in devising new mechanisms to provide a range of global public goods including climate information and forecasting, research and development and the transfer of technology on crops adapted to new weather patterns and techniques to reduce land degradation.

Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues, on behalf of the Malaysian Delegation, I thank you for this opportunity to address the Conference.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRY MALAYSIA
4 JUNE 2008