

POLAND

Statement
by Mr. Andrzej Dycha, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development
of the Republic of Poland
to the High-Level Conference on World Food Security:
the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy
June 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman

During the four roundtables yesterday, we have had the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion on the current and future challenges to world food security, benefiting also from the enlightening information and background papers prepared by the FAO Secretariat. Some of the more specific issues at hand have also been touched upon in the statements of the Presidency of the European Union and the European Commission. I will, therefore, limit my intervention here to a few general remarks.

First of all, I would like to commend FAO for taking the initiative to call such a high-level meeting. This is exactly that type of contribution to global governance in the field of food and agriculture that we are looking for when debating the reform of the Organization in line with the recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation completed last year. Equally welcome is the fruitful cooperation of the three Rome-based UN agencies, as well as the CGIAR in preparing the Conference. FAO, WFP and IFAD have a complementary mandate and together are indispensable ingredients of the immediate, as well as medium and long-term elements of the solution to the challenges in front of us.

On the face of it the global picture is a bleak one. We are not making any significant progress towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people suffering from undernourishment, not to talk about achieving the World Food Summit target of reducing the numbers of undernourished people in the world by half; and now we have to deal with further adverse developments, above all drastically increased food prices.

However closer examination - and this is one of the gains of this conference - reveals that, paradoxically, what seems to be a problem in the short-term might in fact become the remedy in longer term. Following in the vein of Lao Tzu's famous allegory and being succinct: for decades teaching the man how to fish could not do the trick because the man could not afford to keep mending his fishing gear. Now the situation has changed, and it is of vital importance that we do not miss this exceptional window of opportunity. If we do, the matters will only go from bad to worse.

Complex problems require comprehensive measures. With this in mind my country shares many of the wise words which we have had the fortune to listen to for the last three days. Nevertheless, I feel the need to strongly emphasize once again that the phenomena which brought us to Rome this week - rising food prices, climate change, water scarcity, development of bioenergy, rising input costs, looming slowdown in agricultural production growth, and continuing population growth in poorest countries will have by far the greatest negative impact on the least developed and the low income food deficit countries. It is this group of countries that requires our special attention and on which international development assistance and other forms of support should be focused.

Mr. Chairman

Poland belongs to the category of countries where the agricultural sector is of great social and economic importance. Polish agriculture and Polish countryside share most of the problems which typically trouble rural and agricultural development. Polish farmers too stand to gain or lose with the emerging challenges. The acuteness and the scale of our problems might be different from that of most developing countries, but the task of dealing with them still remains formidable. We are in the privileged position of not having to do it alone, joining our efforts with 26 other European countries within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU and benefiting from European solidarity.

Guided by the same strong feeling of solidarity Poland is becoming an active partner in international development cooperation. Since 2003, the last year before our accession to the EU, Polish Official Development Assistance increased more than tenfold, exceeding in 2007 the level of 0.5 billion USD. This figure will continue a steep rise in order to reach in 2010 the declared target of 0.17% ODA/GNI ratio. At current exchange rates this corresponds to about 1.1 billion USD in foreign aid.

Work is currently underway on the strategy of Polish development cooperation for the years 2008-2013. The revived emphasis on agriculture and rural development as an essential tool for poverty reduction, especially in the light of the new challenges and more tangibly the conclusions of this High-Level Conference will undoubtedly find a proper reflection in the content of the strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman