

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF ZANZIBAR,
H.E. DR. AMANI ABEID KARUME,
AT THE HIGH –LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE
WORLD FOOD SECURITY
AT THE FAO HEADQUARTERS,
ROME, TUESDAY, 3RD JUNE, 2008**

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki Moon,
Director General, Food and Agriculture Organisation, Dr. Jacques Diouf,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to convey the greetings from the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairman of the African Union, H.E Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete who would have liked to be with you at this major global Summit on food security but for other equally pressing international commitments; I am honoured and privileged to represent him.

Honourable Chairperson

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this conference. Outright we support the purpose for holding this conference and we congratulate the Director General of FAO Dr. Jacques Diouf, and the Thirty-Fourth Session of the FAO Conference held in Rome in November last year for endorsing the proposal.

Honourable Chairperson

I cannot emphasize enough the serious concern my country and Africa in general give to the prevailing food crisis and its effects on our food security. The stability and the well-being of our states are greatly inter linked to the two. Our countries, after years of effects of under-development are now rising up to economic growth and social development. On the average, the economic growth in Africa currently stands at about 6 per cent per annum. This is no mean feat for many of us who had previously performed below this figure.

This growth heralds hope for the people of my country and Africa. Unfortunately, this hope is endangered by the scenario the world has experienced in the recent

years, as a result of the food crisis and escalating fuel prices. In our countries, already more than 100 million people are suffering from hunger. The sky rocketing prices hit hard the poor people who are striving to move from abject poverty and as a result, peace and stability around the world are threatened. Hence our need for concerted efforts to arrest the situation fast before it worsens as global indicators show.

Honourable Chairperson

We recognize and appreciate the need for diversion of some food crops to bio-energy production but we stress that there must be a balance to ensure that the human food needs are not sacrificed. Today about 4 - 7 per cent of global cereal production is used for bio-fuels. The trend for taking away grain from the food chain to bio-energy is growing and this is frightening especially to low income food importing countries that require food assistance. I appeal to the developed world to be more considerate and apply intensified research to secure alternative fuel sources.

Honourable Chairperson

We recognize and take seriously the various important negotiations which have been going on and vital agreements and conventions which are already in place, interestingly in regard to climate change and trade issues. It is clearly that Africa's agriculture is the most affected due to trade imbalances. We plead for proactive commitment to the international agreements. We need an equitable share of the global trade.

Honourable Chairperson

We are thankful to countries which have generously and quickly responded to emergency requests and equally to those who have pledged to do so. Africa has for a long been badly hit by climate change and now the situation has been worsened by the soaring food and fuel prices.

While emergency actions are being taken, we also call for medium and long-term actions to tackle the African root cause of the problem that is production and productivity which are exceedingly very low. We welcome the approach that is being taken by the UN Agencies and particularly FAO, IFAD and WFP to tackle the problem of hunger by supporting the small farmers with seeds, fertilizers and other production and productivity enhancing inputs. Tackling key issues of irrigation, financial services, infrastructure, marketing, pre-harvest and post-harvest losses

are essential elements to modernize our agriculture. We also urge our Development Partners and International Financial institutions to give importance to these areas.

Honourable Chairperson

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the long-term solution for our agriculture in Africa lies in improvement of production and productivity. This is our architectural frame of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development for which we need your continued support. We look forward to the conclusions and declaration of this very important global Summit on world food security.

I thank you Hon. Chairperson.