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Chairperson of the Steering Committee
of the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition

*Statement at the occasion of the Opening (“Setting the Stage”) Session of the of the
39th Plenary Meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)*

Rome, 15 October 2012

Mr Chairman
Members of the Bureau of the Committee on World Food Security
Excellencies,
Director-General of FAO, Dr Jose Graziano Da Silva
UNSG Special representative, Dr David Nabarro
Madam the Executive Director of WFP, Dr Ertharin Cousin
President of IFAD, Dr Kanayo Nwanze
Members of the Advisory Group,
Ministers,
Honorable Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am grateful for this opportunity to be here to address this unique gathering of policy makers and political leaders committed to the cause of a hunger-free world. Last year, as Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the High-Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), I introduced our first two reports on the topics, indeed commissioned by you:

1. Land Tenure and International Investments in Agriculture
2. Price Volatility and Food Security

On behalf of the Steering Committee of HLPE, as well as the leaders and members of our Study Teams and the Global College of participants in our electronic consultations. I wish to record my sincere gratitude to you, Mr Chairman and to the CFS for the careful

attention paid to our recommendations and also for the subsequent action taken. These issues continue to be relevant today and hence eternal vigilance is essential to ensure that price volatility does not aggravate hunger, that prime farm land is not lost to farming, and that small holders have secure access to their lands.

In the second year of our work, we have been able to produce, in accordance with your own desire, the following two reports which are going to be discussed today:

1. Social Protection for Food Security
2. Climate Change and Food Security

These reports were commissioned by CFS and I am therefore confident that they will receive adequate attention and appropriate action. You are aware that HLPE adopts a very transparent and inclusive process in the preparation of our reports. I have often stressed that **the process** of preparing a report for inter-governmental study and action is as important as **the product**. Therefore, we have documented all our internal procedures and this document is available on the website of the HLPE.

The tenure of the present Steering Committee was scheduled to end with this meeting; however our Members have agreed to the request of the CFS Bureau to continue till next October in order to complete the two new reports which you have commissioned. This period will also pave the way for orderly transition based on the principle of continuity and change in Membership. The 2013 Reports relate to Biofuels and Food Security, and Small Holder Investments in relation to Food Security. The report on Small Holder

Investments to be presented and considered next year will be particularly timely since the **United Nations has designated 2014 as “The Year of Family Farming”**.

There is increasing political concern about the persistence of hunger. This year price volatility in relation to staple grains has increased because of extensive drought in the United States as well as in some other parts of the world including my country India, flood in Nigeria and many other calamities around the world. The Steering Committee and our Study Teams have therefore given considerable attention to methods of minimizing the adverse impact of unfavourable weather on crop production. We will be discussing these reports today.

As Scientists, we cannot allow institutional frontiers or our own individual disciplinary expertise to limit the scope and rigour of our analysis. There are many reports on climate change and its potential impact on food security. We have studied the available reports and looked at the problems in a holistic manner. For example, in the area of climate change, we have been concerned with the consequences of the rise in mean temperature, the more frequent occurrence of extreme weather events like drought and flood, the melting of glaciers, the rise in sea level and the increased frequency of occurrence of coastal storms. In all these cases, we have tried to draw attention to implementable action with reference to both adaptation and mitigation. Many of the steps we are recommending to stabilize food production and minimize price volatility are desirable, whether or not there is climate change. In small farms, it will be advisable to establish a rain-water harvesting pond as well as a biogas plant. In addition, a few Fertilizer Trees like *Faidherbia albida* could be planted, so that there is both soil health enhancement and

building up of soil carbon banks. It has been reported that increasing soil Carbon pool by one ton carbon/hectare/year in the root zone can increase food production by nearly 30 to 50 million tonnes. In other words, our message is that we should convert the calamity of climate change into an opportunity for promoting an ever-green revolution in our farms characterized by increase in productivity in perpetuity without associated ecological harm.

Nearly a third of the human population live near the coast. Anticipatory research and action will be needed for insulating coastal communities from the impact of sea level rise and saline water intrusion. The anticipatory action plan for coastal ecological and livelihood security should include the following: (i) Mangrove and non-mangrove bio-shields should be erected along sea coasts; (ii) Breeding salinity tolerant rice and other crop varieties; (iii) development of agro-forests and coastal aquaculture systems of land and water management; (iv) Conservation and use of halophytes, which are those that are tolerant to salinity.

There is need for research on sea water farming involving the spread of agri-aqua farms. The cultivation of economically valuable halophytes and salinity-tolerant fish species will help to strengthen the food and livelihood security of coastal communities. **We therefore recommend the launching along coastal areas and small islands a scientifically designed seawater farming movement for coastal area prosperity.**

After all, 97% of the global water resource is sea water.

In order to facilitate the detailed examination of actionable suggestions, we launched the two reports a month ago on September 12th in Rome. I am grateful to Drs Stephen Devereux and Jerry Nelson, the two team leaders for sparing time to join us here today. They will be available for discussion when the matter is taken up this afternoon. In the area of social protection, we have recommended that the concept of a “**food security floor**” may be adopted while formulating national food security policies, since this concept will help to promote convergence and synergy among all the food and non-food factors involved in food availability, access and absorption.

At the same time, as this CFS Meeting, the Conference of Parties to the Global Convention on Biological Diversity is taking place at Hyderabad, India. COP 11 is very much concerned with the issue of biodiversity and food security. One of our recommendations is to enlarge the food basket in order to include vanishing crops and dying wisdom. In the past, food and health security were based on several hundred crops, but gradually five or six crops started dominating the food market. Millets belonging to *Panicum*, *Pennisetum*, *Paspalum*, *Setaria* and other genera are both nutritious and climate smart. Therefore, it will be appropriate to refer to them as **Climate Smart Nutri-Cereals**, rather than as **coarse cereals** as at present.

We have also recommended the publication of an annual **Social Protection Monitor** which will bring together the experiences around the world of the efficacy and impact of different social protection measures. For example, the publication on Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) by Drs Jose Graziano Da Silva, Mauro Eduardo Del Grossi and Caio Galvao De Franca brings out clearly why this programme was very effective. It has several

innovative features which ought to be more widely known. I do hope that either FAO or WFP or IFAD will take the responsibility to bring out an Annual Social Protection Monitor, so that we can purchase time in learning from both effective and not very successful examples.

As I mentioned earlier, the 2013 reports will relate to biofuels and Small Holder Investments in relation to Food Security. We have also suggested to the Bureau of CFS that during 2014 the following three topics could be considered for in depth study and analysis?

1. The Role of Living Aquatic Resources in Food Security;
2. Agro-biodiversity, Genetic Resources and Food Security;
3. Scientific Dialogue on Research for Food Security.

Since our reports are demand-driven, it is up to CFS to indicate its priorities in the matter of seeking the scientific advice of HLPE.

I wish to place on record our gratitude to Ambassador Yaya Olaniran, Chair of CFS and Members of the CFS Bureau for their continuous advice and encouragement. My sincere gratitude goes to Ms Maryam Rahmanian, Vice-Chair and the members of the Steering Committee. They are all giving their time free for this important work. My particular thanks goes to the Government of France for making the services of Mr Vincent Gitz available to serve as Coordinator of the HLPE. He has been rendering outstanding service and is largely responsible for our being able to stick to timelines and remain within the framework of the Terms of Reference.

My thanks are due to Steering Committee Members Catherine Bertini, Alain de Janvry and Huajung Tang who have shouldered extra burden of work by serving as Conveners of the Oversight of the elaboration of our reports. Our last meeting was held at St.Petersburg, thanks to the support of the Government of Russia and the untiring efforts of our Member, Igor Tikhonovich. We owe a great deal to the dedication of the Leaders and Members of our Study Teams for the success of our work.

Obviously, the work of our Committee would not have been possible, but for the generous support of donors. In particular I wish to thank the Governments of Australia, European Union, France, Ireland, United Kingdom, Russia, Spain and Switzerland for their generous support. We work on a very cost-effective manner and our annual budget is about 1 million US Dollars covering all expenses including the translation. I wish to thank the various eminent experts who have worked free because of their commitment to the cause of sustainable global food security. Through open electronic consultations, we were able to get the benefit of advice from a very large number of scientists worldwide. I am happy to say that in our teams, we have mobilized an equally large number of experts both from OECD (45%) and non-OECD countries (55%), thereby making our effort truly global.

Mr Chairman and Delegates:

On August 12, 2012 the closing day of the London Olympics, the UK Government launched a programme designed to rescue 25 million children from malnutrition induced stunting, between now and 2016 when the next Olympics will take place at Rio de

Janeiro. This is a laudable initiative and I hope it will lead to the infusion of the Olympic Spirit to the battle against hunger. Like those contesting the Olympic games, let us develop the will and determination to succeed.

15 October 2012

M S Swaminathan
Chair, Steering Committee, HLPE