

37th Session of the FAO
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Speech delivered by Prof. José Graziano da Silva
Brazilian candidate to the post of
Director-General of FAO

Mr. Chairman,

Heads of State and of Government,

Ministers,

Distinguished delegates of member countries,

1. Over the past six months, I have had the honour of talking with many of you. I have also met with scientists, academics, farmers, diplomats, politicians and NGOs, around the world.
2. What has impressed me most in these discussions is the degree of consensus that has emerged. So, today, rather than talking about my vision for FAO, I will try to summarise what I believe is our common vision of our Organization.
3. The first point on which we agree is that we need a strong and effective FAO – now more than ever! There has been a long period of neglect of agriculture, fisheries, forestry, rural development and food security.
4. The present global economic and food crises are a wake-up call. They remind us how interconnected we are. They have also shown up the limited capacities of global institutions to ensure that the benefits of globalization are fairly shared.
5. No-where is this more evident than in food and agriculture. An individual nation can do much to stimulate its agriculture and to ensure access to food. But some issues have to be addressed on a global scale. These include among others food security governance, transboundary diseases, the conservation of ocean fish stocks and the impact of climate change. These are issues that FAO must deal with. And we all agree that it must have the capacity to address them.
6. This brings me to a second point of consensus: we agree that there is an imbalance between Members' expectations of what FAO should do and the powers and resources given to the Organization. The agenda for FAO action is growing faster than its capacity to respond.
7. Over and over, member nations have been calling for more technical cooperation in new areas. I would like to have responded to them with promises that, if elected, I would ensure that all their requests would be met, that I could mobilize more than 20 billion dollars in the coming years. But I am profoundly conscious that this would have been demagogic, especially at a time when many donor nations are facing financial difficulties.
8. I am determined to fill this gap, bringing on board middle-income countries, increasing South-South Cooperation activities and expanding triangular arrangements, involving donor nations and international foundations. I am confident that, if we formulate good projects, money can be found for them.

9. We also agree that FAO has to do much to improve its efficiency and rid itself of bureaucracy and enhance its accountability. Member countries must be assured that they are getting value for money.

10. The agreed IPA reform process may not fulfill all of our individual dreams, but it reflects the consensus achieved over years of discussion with the participation of all member States. I reaffirm my commitment to implement our reform and bring it to a rapid conclusion. Let me repeat loud and clear my commitment for rapid implementation of our agreed reform !

11. A third area of agreement is that FAO has to respond better to the priorities of its different Regions. The Organization needs to decentralize but not on a "one size fits all" basis. It must tailor the mix of professional staff to each region. It must engage in more partnerships with the Regional Economic Commissions as well as other regional bodies (like NEPAD, SICA, ASEAN, and many others). And it must make much more use of local human resources within the regions - especially regional and national consultants -, as well as of locally procured goods.

12. I am delighted that many governments – particularly in Latin America, Asia and Africa - have told me of their interest in deepening their work with FAO to enhance the status of women.

13. Let me take this opportunity to confirm that Africa must continue to be given the highest priority by FAO. And that we should base our cooperation on the CAADP/NEPAD comprehensive framework.

14. I have also learned that FAO needs to respond to the new concept of the "blue economy", for the conservation of marine resources. For many Small Island States, in particular the Caribbean and Pacific regions, eradicating hunger is closely linked to the sustainable use of their oceans, particularly of their fish stocks.

15. The countries that face critical shortages of water in Central Asia, Near East and North Africa have told me of the key role they see for FAO in the management of water resources, especially transboundary rivers and lakes.

16. Many countries have called for more of their nationals to be employed by FAO, especially small developing nations and Russian-speaking countries that recently joined the Organization. Rather than make vain promises in the hope of your votes, I simply assure you that I will respect FAO's standards on geographical representation, while maintaining the highest technical quality of staffing. Special recruitment missions will be sent to minimize the number of under-represented and particularly non-represented countries, as soon as possible.

17. Let me take this opportunity to say that I have not treated the appointment of senior managers as an election issue. I could have promised not only one DDG for Africa, but seven: one for each region ... Instead, I will discuss this issue during the coming six months with all regional groups in an open and transparent manner. My political experience from twenty five years of working with President Lula tells me that we need to achieve a minimum agreement on this crucial governance and political issue, otherwise it will be impossible to run FAO in a participative way.

18. The fourth area of consensus relates to the priorities for FAO. I sense substantial agreement around my five pillars' proposal to focus on eradicating hunger, promoting a shift to truly sustainable food production, ensuring greater fairness in global food management, quickly implementing the agreed reform process and expanding south-south cooperation.

Distinguished Heads of Delegations,

19. How you vote tomorrow will have a long-term effect on FAO. This election can be the beginning of a transition in the way we run FAO.

20. It is very important that the next DG should be able to count on the full support of all member nations. The new DG needs to achieve a huge majority not only to win the election, but also to run this Organization.

21. Given the strong support that my candidacy has received from many countries of all regions, I am confident that I can bridge the gulf that has too often weakened FAO's capacity to take decisions. The big challenges that we face today require that we build consensus in order to move forward quickly. If elected, I will work day and night on this.

22. My track record shows that I can bring to the Organization the leadership that it needs. I have spent my whole working life dealing with issues related to agriculture, food security and sustainable development that are central to FAO's mandate. Not only have I taught and written about them, but as first Minister of Food Security in Brazil, I have led the design and implementation of the Zero Hunger programme that has enabled millions of people to escape from hunger.

23. In FAO, as Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, I focussed on deepening our engagement with governments and regional organizations; and on building effective partnerships across the UN system, with the private sector and with civil society.

24. I am a candidate who knows FAO from both the outside and the inside, and I believe that I understand its weaknesses and its strengths.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

25. Let me finish by quoting what John Lennon once said:

"A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality".

26. Should you choose to elect me tomorrow, the only thing I can truly promise you is that I will do all within my capacity to ensure that our shared dreams for FAO become reality.

Thank you