

Mr MOHAMMAD SAEID NOORI NAEINI (CANDIDATE TO THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL)

When it comes to drawing lots I have never been lucky and today has not been an exception. I have learned to do things the hard way.

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure for me to be here in this hall where we have been together so many times before talking about and seeing what we can do to reduce poverty and hunger for our planet. During the last few years we have been living with crisis, energy crisis, food crisis, financial crisis and economic crisis. We also have been living with global threats; climate change, natural disasters, the consequences of dictatorship rulings and mismanagement of eco-systems. Against this background I do have only 14 minutes to tell you who I am why I am a candidate for Director General of FAO and what I am going to do if elected. Let's start with who am I and why I am a candidate for this post.

I was born and went to a school in Naein, a small city at the edge of a central desert of Iran, virtually a desert itself. Early in my life I have seen poverty and have experienced hunger so these concepts are real facts of life to me and not just only a slogan. After finishing high school, in spite of other opportunities that I did have to further my studies I chose agriculture because agriculture was providing both the livelihood and dignity of my people. I earned my Masters degree, with distinction from Tehran University and it won me a scholarship to continue my studies at Cornell University in the United States of America. I wrote my, Ph. D thesis on economical analysis of resource allocation issues in traditional agricultural. It was a research on the lives of small agricultural producers and how we can lift them from the low equilibrium that they are captured into a decent life.

My professional career progressed as a researcher, a professor and a senior manager because I strongly believe that human capacity building is the strongest instrument to fight against hunger and poverty. Before coming to FAO as Permanent Representative of my country I had the opportunity to work in Africa for a while working on food security issues and I did gain valuable experience there.

During my 11 years of service, to the three Rome-based organizations FAO, IFAD and WFP, I have learned a lot from my colleagues and especially from the staff of these three organizations. At the same time I tried to be as useful as possible, I have chaired many committees, commissions and working groups etc. including the Presidency of the Executive Board of WFP, and Chairman of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). But dearest to my heart is the Chairmanship of the inter-governmental working group to prepare the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Food. We all together prepared these guidelines two years ago and it was unanimously approved. It is dear to me because the spirit of these guidelines says that matters of food security and hunger are not issues of benevolence and charity. Food is a basic human right for every human being on the planet.

In 2006, I had the honour to be elected as the Independent Chairman of the Council of FAO. We undertook the Independent External Evaluation during that period. Then I was elected the

Chairman of the Committee of the Conference for preparing the Immediate Plan of Action so called the renewal of FAO. In this capacity I had the privilege of bringing the negotiations on Immediate Plan of Action to a successful and unanimous approval by an Extraordinary Session of the Conference in 2008.

So if some of you are calling me the father of the FAO reform it is not only because of my white hair it has to do something with being with this Immediate Plan of Action from its very inception to its approval. Now I am here to announce that I am ready to deliver change, the change that we all together studied, designed, planned and approved. In other words the post of Director-General of FAO for me is not another job; it is culmination of a life committed to fight against poverty and hunger. It is the continuation of a determination which started some 50 years ago in a small town at the edge of the desert.

What I am going to do?

We are not going to start FAO renewal from scratch. As I said this would be a continuation from a strong base we developed as Member States together with committed FAO staff and it should be continued. FAO as a provider of global public goods must emerge less as a relatively small single actor and much more as a partner in the United Nations. In particular strengthening our links with and mobilizing NGOs, civil society, private sector, academia and farmers organizations at national and international levels. The long desire closer collaboration with Rome-based agencies IFAD and WFP is a pure priority and so is the High Level Task Force on Global Food Security Crisis.

During the past five years member countries, all of us, and the management have had many opportunities to express their ideas, their views and visions in summits and in high level conferences. Much has been said, now we have to deliver and together we can deliver.

Particularly high on the immediate agenda now will be how to work towards global consensus on issues of food supplies and prices, including the questions of safety nets for the poorest and the destabilizing effects of major price fluctuations and price volatility. We have to better enable countries to access the support they need in technical cooperation for capacity building and policy development whether from FAO or other providers.

Should you elect me, I pledge to move forward the agreed reform agenda with renewed vigour and to continuously search together with the membership, staff and global, regional and national partners, for ways to go forward more efficiently, more quickly but above all more effectively. As a Director-General pledged to serve only one single term I will be able to work with you for longer-term benefits, without attention to short-term personal advantage. To lead but also facilitate, to listen as well as give my views.

I will be present in Rome and in the decentralized offices of FAO, in order to actively consult and manage.

I commit to listening to member countries collectively, as well as individually, be present in major meetings to directly engage in dialogue with members.

I will further strengthen accountability, transparency and budget allocation within the agreed results-based programme.

I will lead, as well as facilitate, the breaking down of the silos of power and ensure technical and administrative discipline within units in the FAO secretariat.

I will push forward genuine decentralization and delegation with adequate oversight and concentration of effort for real results.

I will lead development of the capacity of the FAO secretariat, reinforcing professionalism, technical competence, motivation and geographical and gender balance at all levels of the FAO secretariat within a fair and equitable, but results-based, human resource management system.

We will look for more efficiency savings wherever possible, starting directly with my own expenses as Director-General and that of my office. Units will be consolidated throughout FAO and delegation of authority will reduce layers.

In short, as Director-General for all member countries acting in consensus with you, I will strive with the membership and staff, to ensure FAO becomes more responsive and flexible.

In a stronger position to make its critical contributions to the changing world needs, never forgetting the poorest among us, but not forgetting either the needs of this and future generations for sustainability and economic growth.

I know this will sound like a difficult pledge but as I said earlier, since I pledged to serve only a single term I will be able to make hard and tough decisions.

I pledge to sit down with decision makers at global, regional and country levels to prepare programmes and plans which are location specific and matches the needs of them but more importantly considers the opportunities which exists. We usually tend to forget that there are many opportunities even in the least developed and poorest countries of the world. We have to search for that.

I want to remind you of one thing. Staff of FAO are under the state of reform fatigue. Not only do we have the reform of FAO but we are having the reform of CFS. We have had two reforms introduced by the DG before that so that is the time to put an end to more reforms. We do have an Immediate Plan of Action approved by all of us. I know that the world does not stand still it changes and accordingly we have to make changes to our Immediate Plan of Action but we do have an Immediate Plan of Action and we have to implement that.

The four next years would provide an opportunity for me to continue my work and to finalise implementation to the reform which we started about six years ago together and I think it would bring lots of efficiency to this organization.

I will strive with the membership and staff to ensure FAO becomes more responsive and flexible and in a stronger position to make its critical contribution to the changing world needs.