

Mr Abdul Latif RASHID (Director-General Candidate from Iraq)

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman. I am very pleased to be with you today to introduce myself as a candidacy to the post of FAO Director-General.

The FAO is the largest specialized United Nations agency. Therefore, the FAO's success or failure is the main indicator of the entire UN system and its global commitments in improving standards of living across the world.

The principles and activities of the FAO are valid today as they were when the FAO was established in 1945. These activities can be implemented through the various committees and offices taking into account the strategy of the Organization and the core functions and activities of the Organization, which I am sure most of you are familiar with. These are related to agriculture, consumer protection, economic and social development, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, natural resources, environment and the technical cooperation, which I think is a very important aspect of this Organization.

The FAO is now required, more than ever to ensure a world free of hunger. The right to food is a human right. We are all aware that global hunger is too widespread, it is estimated that over a billion people are hungry as we speak here today. The world population is expected to increase to reach over nine billion by 2050. This requires an increase of at least 70 percent in food production. Competition on limited resources of land and water in many countries is taking place. The effect of environmental and ecological degradation on food production is becoming a very serious problem. Climate change and its impact on agriculture, particularly on smallholders, is a reality that is damaging. Emphasis should be given to field work and project implementations through adequate consultation and engagement with all member countries and Member States. Reform in an organization like FAO is important and is actually required in every institution, including FAO.

The FAO ongoing reforms are pleasing, I have seen some of them, and there could be room for speeding up the programme of the reforms. I believe the reform and improvements of efficiency of any large organization, especially an organization like FAO, should be a continuous process. I am also pleased with the reforms made to CFS, which I am sure all of you are familiar with, and I believe the new CFS can carry out its mandate as the main global forum to debate and develop policies on world food security. Talking about the CFS, I would like to mention that the CFS cannot impose its policies on countries. It supports country-led programmes and policies to ensure food security, it is a forum for debate and recommendations and it is a forum for advising each country on how to deal with this serious problem in the world.

The UN has many sister organizations and agencies. The partnership with sister organizations in the field of coordination and cooperation I think is very important. In Rome, there are many organizations for example WFP and IFAD, as well as other global and regional partners and stakeholders and it is necessary to cooperate and coordinate with them.

One aspect is the recommendation of CFS related to food prices and volatility of food prices which is a major issue. There is a real need for stability in the food market. FAO shall play its role and it will be helping member countries in having clear policies and offering technical support for the food market and making all the data available to every state.

I would like to declare here that I will continue to make the FAO a member-guided organization through involving all Member States, more consultations and more engagements. Enhance the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) of FAO and link it with the priorities of each country and each region. Increase the field presence and support for the decentralization process and encourage the South-South cooperation and dialogue. Focus on developing and implementing projects aiming at improving both food and agricultural products.

Of course, efficiency is very important. I will try to improve the efficiency of FAO and the FAO's Governing Bodies by encouraging full participation and oversight by all Member States. Maintain the ability of FAO to react satisfactorily to any humanitarian crisis while keeping its major function as a proactive development agency in the area of food and agriculture. Enhance FAO voluntary contributions and resource mobilization through prudent, and I emphasize prudent, execution of budget and measurable deliveries and outcomes. Obviously, this is related to assessed budget contributions and voluntary or, as it is called here, extrabudgetary contributions.

I will embark on continuous reform to achieve, first of all, a truly democratic and neutral UN agency where all nations are engaged in sharing the responsibility of eradicating hunger. Promote sound policies and assistance in modernizing and transforming world agriculture towards increase of production and sustainability. Ensure maximum efficiency of FAO Governing Bodies through transparency, better management and accountability, and I emphasize transparency, management and accountability. Increase the FAO presence in the field and support the decentralization process to enhance the regional offices and regional activities. I believe a positive cultural change that motivates the FAO staff to deliver more, has to be looked into and introduced. Promote gender equality and woman's role in agriculture production. Empower regional offices to work closely with every region and engage civil society and reputable NGOs. Obviously all these activities need assessments and monitoring activities for implementation at every stage.

Personally I have been lucky to have qualifications and experience in private and public sectors, UN organizations and Government institutions including ministries. I would like to put my service at the organization's disposal to carry out the necessary activities for this important organization which I have all the faith in and to carry out the necessary activities which I think are still required by every country and every state in the world and these activities with efficiencies and reforms which have been outlined to achieve our objectives and the strategy of the Organization when it was established.

I want to declare here, if I am elected, and I hope I will be, I will personally cut my salary by 10 percent and put it back into the Organization's budget for the Technical Cooperation Programme which I have a lot of faith in.