

**Special Event on "The role of aquaculture in sustainable development"**

**19 November 2007**

**Welcoming Remarks by the Director-General of FAO**

**Your Excellencies Ministers and Heads of delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to welcome you, today, at the FAO HQ, on the occasion of this Special Event on the role of aquaculture in sustainable development. The staff of the Organization shares my pleasure in welcoming you and thanks you for the very good attendance. This clearly reflects the unambiguous expression of a political commitment to ensure the success of a shared and agreed objective, that of enhancing the role of aquaculture not only in combating hunger and poverty but also in contributing to the economic and social development of Nations and their people, in particular the less developed.

I regret to inform you that for reasons beyond his control, our Keynote Speaker, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse, President of the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka cannot be present physically. However, acknowledging the high importance of the matter that you will discuss, he wished to address the meeting through a recorded message.

I am also very pleased to inform you that H E Ms Helga Pedersen, Minister of Fisheries and Coastal affairs of Norway and H E Mr Amin Ahmed Mohamed Othman Abbaza, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, have kindly accepted to co-chair this event.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Since the beginning of this year, the name of the Fisheries Department has changed. It's now the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. In proposing this new title I wanted that, within the framework of the FAO reform, the new stakes of aquaculture, in particular the increasing importance of its contribution in the fight against hunger and poverty throughout the World and the necessity of its promotion as an economic activity, are better reflected in our work programme.

Now, without taking too much of your time, I would like to touch briefly on some of the issues you will be discussing this afternoon. You certainly will agree with me that this special event is a unique occasion to review the current

status of world aquaculture, to determine the trends, and set at the highest level, priorities and future actions.

First of all, there are a number of positive and encouraging elements such as the political commitment of decision-makers to include aquaculture in their agenda and to formulate policies and strategies for a harmonious and sustainable development of the sector.

Aquaculture continues its rise at a much faster pace than that of all other sectors of food production from animal origin. Worldwide, a yearly annual growth of 8.8% since 1970, compared to only 1.2% of growth in capture fisheries and 2.8% for livestock production in the same period. It has been projected that, considering the current level of population growth and to maintain at least the current level of per caput fish consumption, by the year 2030, the world will need 85 million tons of fish from aquaculture.

Those are some of the positive aspects.

But there are also major constraints, that cannot be ignored, and which represent real threats to the development of Aquaculture. Although there are regional differences, I should mention, among these; the increasing scarcity of land and water available for aquaculture, particularly freshwater for establishing farms, the limited availability of fish at affordable prices for feeding fish, the inadequate access to investment capital especially in developing countries, the rising cost of energy, as well as the inability of small farmers to compete in the international market due to application of non tariff barriers to trade. We also cannot ignore climate change and its potential effects on ecosystems and resources. As aquaculture is expanding rapidly, it is important to ensure better planning and management, without which the sector may present unavoidable negative environmental consequences. The future performance of the sector will depend highly on the solutions provided for these problems.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the verge of the third millennium, the development of Aquaculture has become a necessity to compensate the levelling off in capture fisheries production. The potential for Aquaculture to play a significant role in social and economic development in many countries has been fully recognised and has become a proven fact.

However, this potential can only be fully achieved if viable solutions are found to the difficulties I mentioned earlier.

In that respect, it will not come to your surprise that I seize the opportunity to remind of the importance of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries that was elaborated by FAO.

The Code of Conduct provides provisions for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development and management, through defining policy and adopting practical measures for implementing them at regional, sub-regional, national as well as local levels; while taking into account the specificities of each country.

I have high hopes that this meeting will give further momentum to the efforts already under way to achieve this goal.

I thank you.