

**DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND LIGHT INDUSTRY OF MONGOLIA**

**Statement – The Ministerial Meeting 35<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Asia Pacific Regional Conference**

**Virtual meeting, Thimphu, Bhutan**

**Excellency the Director General of FAO**

**Excellencies and Plenipotentiary Delegates**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Good afternoon. Sain baina uu? On behalf of Government of Mongolia, I wish to convey our greetings to you all. Allow me to express my sincere thanks to the Organizing Committee for facilitating this dialogue and giving the platform for Asia Pacific country states to come together during the difficult global crisis times.
2. Thankfully with quick response and effective measures from the government, Mongolia has avoided local transmission of COVID 19 and has been working tirelessly together with partners to keep the situation under control. Government's effective measures have also ensured food security situation is not adversely affected. FAO and other UN agencies have partnered with the Government of Mongolia and I take this opportunity to thank all partners for their support. For agriculture sector, I specially thank FAO for swift action on providing technical support and inputs for expanding vegetable production in Mongolia.
3. While Mongolia has been successful in dealing with the crisis so far, we cannot take these achievements for granted. As you are aware, Mongolia is a landlocked country and depends on international trade for meeting food needs and for supporting income generation and employment creation in the country. Mongolia aspires to become a leading exporter in international agriculture trade, specially livestock products, and is working closely with FAO and other partners in meeting that goal. In that respect, I take this opportunity to join the global call and the joint statement issued by the heads of four UN agencies—FAO, UNICEF, WHO and WFP— to come together more than any other time, ease the trade barriers and take immediate action now! Mongolia will give special focus on keeping the food systems going without disruptions, ensuring the safe, nutritious and affordable diets to all population and the most vulnerable.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. I would also like to highlight that the Agriculture and Rangelands are the heart and a backbone of Mongolia and plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development, growth and the stability of the country. Mongolian unique extensive livestock production and rangelands support the livelihoods of most rural people and the economy. However, these are coming under pressure and the annual cost of land degradation in Mongolia is estimated at 2.1 billion USD. Sustaining and preserving the rangelands is a priority for Mongolia for preserving ecosystems, reducing poverty, sustaining livelihood and ensuring food security. Using this opportunity, I would like to call upon the international community to join us in our efforts to the designation of a UN International Year of rangelands and pastoralists, which will raise the profile and support for rangelands and pastoral issues globally and nationally.
5. The world is changing at a high speed with digitalization taking over every field. Mongolia is committed to employ digital technologies and innovations into agriculture sector, to address the most pressuring challenges of sector. Innovative ICT solutions are crucial in increasing agriculture productivity, improving livelihoods and enhancing sector efficiency in Mongolia, considering the widespread, expansive territory, extreme weather conditions, and inadequate infrastructure. In this regard, Mongolia has worked closely with FAO Mongolia, the International Telecom Union, the Communications and Information Technology Authority of Mongolia and other stakeholders in developing national e-agriculture strategy and we remain committed to operationalizing that strategy with support of all development partners.
6. I wish to again thank FAO Asia Pacific Regional Office and the APRC Organizing committee for the opportunity to take part in this dialogue. Today, let us join hands to call for more connected, more integrated, more cooperative and united actions on food security and nutrition and sustainable, climate smart agriculture development. The global crisis reminds us the new normal and that we must work harder than before -Together!