



## **REPUBLIC OF NAURU**

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HONOURABLE RENNIER STANISLAUS GADABU M,P.,**

**MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT**

**35<sup>TH</sup> FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**1-4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

Your Excellencies  
Honourable Ministers  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen

**Chair,**

Ekamawir Omo and Greetings from Nauru.

At the outset, please allow me to thank the Royal Government of Bhutan and FAO for convening this first ever virtual FAO conference for the Asia Pacific region. I commend all your efforts in marching on, especially in light of the challenges posed by the global pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to express a warm greeting to the new Director General, Dr Qu Dongyu. I must also recognize and congratulate the new Assistant Director General and FAO Regional Representative for the Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Jongjin Kim.

**Chair,**

Nauru is an island nation, with a population of 10,000 living on a landmass of just 21 square kilometres. This makes us the smallest independent republic in the world. It should go without saying that the pandemic, the devastating effects of climate change, the immensity of the NCD crisis, the vulnerability of our small economy, the challenges of our geographical isolation, land degradation, and food and nutrition insecurities; all of these have pushed the

capacities and resources of this particular micro-state beyond our limit.

Nauru is almost completely reliant on imports for its food supply. Our domestic production is next to zero. There is limited arable land for agricultural farming and the country's development continues to be impacted by extreme climate events such as droughts and sea level rise.

Nauru is at the end of the food supply chain making us extremely vulnerable to external factors beyond our control that can sever or restrict our access to food supplies. As borders closed off, there was an alarming threat of food shortage in my country. With Nauru being completely reliant on one transporter of freight the shipping supplier Neptune took advantage of the monopoly by significantly raising prices and by being a hindrance to our new and sovereign COVID19 regulations. I cannot stress how important it is to show solidarity in the face of a global crisis.

The pandemic has really put things into perspective for my country -- there can be no denying that food security is absolutely central to our **national security**.

Consultants who have conducted in country missions have told us to develop kitchen gardens, but are these enough to help us address our food and nutrition insecurities? In my assessment, the current situation gives rise to one main question: Kitchen gardens are not enough so how do we produce food in Nauru at scale?

**Chair,**

It is common to find host countries in the Pacific region disproportionately benefiting from or influencing the opportunities provided through the regional and international agencies. These agencies are concentrated in the South, leaving Nauru and other Micronesian states' in the North Pacific often overlooked. The Micronesian states called for the establishment of a UN Multi Country Office (MCO) for the UN to better respond to our needs. With the announcement of its plans to have a dedicated MCO in our region our leaders agreed to have it established in the Federated States of Micronesia. It is expected that this office should provide the support required from the UN to help address our unique challenges and

priorities and this includes FAO to help us achieve food and nutrition security and to tackle the inequities of the global food system.

**Chair,**

Nauru should be considered a storage facility for the our region where food and other essential supplies can be collected and deposited, and in the event of any natural disasters in our region, food supplies and other necessary resources can be quickly mobilized. You may wonder, what makes Nauru the ideal storage facility? My country is a raised coral-limestone island and our proximity to the equator makes us free from natural disasters. We are strategically located in the middle of the Pacific, and with the transformation of our port into a world class climate resilient sea port, along with a successful regional air carrier, we can serve as a natural transport hub for the region. We have also recently established our own shipping line. Viewed from a disaster preparedness angle, this concept is economically and strategically sensible. This is regionalism at its best.

**Chair,**

Our last agriculture strategic plan expired in 2017, and so our food sector is functioning with very little direction. Nauru requested the assistance of FAO to develop an Agriculture Strategic Plan in 2018 including a Food and Nutrition Security Strategic Plan only recently. Response had been slow even prior to COVID19, and now that the world has stalled due to the pandemic, I am gravely concerned that the support required from FAO may be further delayed. I would hope that the Organization can respond to our appeal for assistance in developing these roadmaps in a manner that shows similar urgency.

**Chair,**

Nauru welcomes the Hand In Hand Initiative, whereby FAO will match developing countries with developed country partners to accelerate the achievements of the SDGs. This initiative is indeed timely considering that food security challenges are being compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and I hope Nauru will be considered to join this initiative.

I note from the paper on water scarcity that the Pacific is not mentioned and I hope that the same attention will also be given to us to help address our water security issues.

**In closing,**

Food security and nutrition is not only a priority for Nauru but we consider it an issue of **national security** and anticipate FAO's support in taking better coordinated and more coherent actions on the ground to ensure that no one or no nation is left behind.

Mwa Tubwa and Thank you