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Thirtieth Session

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Statement by the Chairperson of the 29th Session of the Regional Conference for Europe

*Your Excellency Mr Director-General of FAO,
Your Excellencies Ministers,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors,
Honourable Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Turkey and particularly to the people of Turkey for their warm welcome. It is an honour for me to speak at this 30th Session on behalf of the Chair of the 29th European Regional Conference (ERC).
2. I would like to use this opportunity to build the bridge between the 29th ERC in Bucharest, and the 30th ERC here in Antalya.
3. The Conference made very important recommendations under Programme and Budget matters and Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters, which I reported to the 149th Session of the FAO Council, held in June 2014 and the 39th Session of FAO Conference, held in June 2015, respectively.
4. My presentation today will focus on the follow-up to recommendations made at the 29th ERC.
5. The 149th Session of the Council endorsed¹ the **Priorities for FAO Activities in the Region**. In this context it:
 - endorsed the relevance of the existing regional priorities for FAO's work in the region for 2014-15 and the close alignment of regional priorities with FAO's new Strategic Objectives;
 - supported the two Regional Initiatives: i) empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction; and (ii) agrifood trade and regional integration;

¹ CL149/REP, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mk880e.pdf>, paragraphs 8 and 13-37.

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- supported the other major areas of work in the region such as control of animal disease, plant pests, food-safety hazards and emergencies; as well as natural resources management and conservation and sustainable use of plant and animal genetic resources;
- urged FAO to focus its efforts in areas where it has a comparative advantage, in particular in the dissemination of knowledge and policy advice, technical assistance, capacity-building and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation;
- highlighted that FAO could provide effective leadership and establish partnerships with other organizations in the areas within its mandate;
- suggested that the work of FAO should duly consider cross-cutting issues such as gender, rural youth and indigenous people.

6. I am glad to see, as a follow-up to the recommendations, that agenda item 10 - *Results from the implementation of Work and Budget 2014-15* - shows the important results under the Regional Initiatives achieved in the region, and Regional Initiative 1 – empowering smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia - further promoted the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

7. Regional Initiative 2 – Agrifood trade and Regional integration - developed an important e-learning course on WTO accession and established the agriculture and trade policy expert network in the region.

8. **Related to the discussion on Decentralization and Decentralized Office Network** the Council endorsed the region-specific conclusions, which I would like to highlight in order to link them to our agenda today:

- the measures pursued to reinforce the capabilities in the Decentralized Offices of the Region through a skill-mix review;
- actions taken to strengthen the capacities of country offices, and the focus on 12 priority countries;
- two fully-fledged FAO representations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as two assistant FAOR posts in Moldova and Uzbekistan should be established;
- endorsing the establishment of a country presence in Albania.

9. Item 9 on the agenda today will also indicate the results achieved in this context such as the establishment and opening of the FAO Representations under multiple accreditation in Albania, Moldova and Uzbekistan and the recent opening of Partnership and Liaison offices in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and finally the establishment of a Liaison office in the Russian Federation.

10. **Furthermore, the decision of the 38th Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) to hold its future sessions separate from the ERC, resulted in the organization of the 39th Session of the ECA in September 2015 in Budapest, contributing to the technical preparation of this 30th Session of the ERC.**

11. In this context, I would also like to highlight that, with the decision of the 28th Session of the European Inland and Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) and the 38th Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) to report to the European Regional Conference, as reflected in the agenda items 13 and 14 of today's agenda, further coherence in programming and priority setting in the region has been achieved.

12. **In addition, the Council also endorsed the recommendations of the ERC related to the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW),** which also stressed the close interaction between the Executive Committee of the ECA and the European Regional Group. Regular consultations with the European Regional Group have been held, with the Chair of the Executive Committee of the ECA briefing the European Regional Group on the outcomes of the ECA Executive Committee Session.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

13. I also attended the 39th Session of the FAO Conference, which endorsed the report from the 29th European Regional Conference and took note of the recommendations it presented.²

14. **Related to the State of Food and Agriculture in the region, including future prospects,** the main recommendations included:

- emphasis on the primary responsibility of countries to tackle national food security and nutrition and to give appropriate importance to food security and nutrition as well as to agriculture;
- recommendations for a multi-partner approach by all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector;
- consideration of the development of agriculture through strengthening of family farms to be of importance.

15. I would like to highlight that in several countries, for example in Tajikistan, support has been provided to improve the quality of food security and nutrition-related data and information. FAO has also contributed in the region to the technical working group on scaling up nutrition (SUN).

16. **Related to food losses and waste in Europe and Central Asia** I would like to highlight some of the main recommendations such as:

- recognition of the serious impact of food losses and waste on hunger and malnutrition;
- agreement that reducing food losses and waste is closely linked to the right to adequate food for all people in the world;
- that FAO should continue to address gaps in the availability of data and statistics on food losses and waste,
- endorsement that FAO, in cooperation with donors, continues to support member countries in their effort to include small farmers in the value chain in an effort to reduce food losses.

17. I would like to stress therefore, that the work of Regional Initiative 1 – empowering smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia – worked towards increasing the capacity of smallholders in value-chain integration.

18. **Related to the International Year of Family Farming** I would like to refer to the following recommendations:

- note has been taken of the need for an enabling environment, supportive legal framework, access to natural resources, to financial support as well as training and education.
- the consideration that family farming is crucial for the sustainability of agriculture and preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage;
- the reiteration of family farming from economic, socio-cultural and environmental perspectives, calling for family farming to be positioned at the centre of agriculture and rural development policies.

19. It should be noted that several events in the region related to the promotion of family farming have been organized in 2014 as well as that Regional Initiative 1 has provided capacity development to rural organizations also to increase equal opportunities for men and women. Agrarian reforms have been supported by FAO at policy level in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro through the development of their national strategies for agriculture and rural development, with emphasis on the role of family farms and smallholders.

² C2015/REP <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mo153e.pdf>, paragraph 36.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

20. The European and Central Asia Region is very heterogeneous. This makes the work of the organization challenging, but it also provides opportunities.

21. We should focus on the possibilities of strengthening partnerships in the region, with civil society as well as the private sector.

22. I am glad to see that both civil society and the private sector are represented at this Regional Conference. Linkage with these partners is vital for the work of the Organization in the future.

23. But it is not only enhancing partnership with civil society and the private sector; it is also partnership with us as members.

24. The Informal Consultation that was held in May 2015 in Budapest demonstrates this transparency and openness. I believe it has proven that it is an important instrument, and the agenda of this ERC is one of the products of this process. I would like to encourage the Organization and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to continue this approach against the background of efficient and effective use of resources.

25. In concluding my presentation, I would like to look ahead, and would like to highlight the facilitating role of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. This is crucial for transfer of existing knowledge, cooperation, dialogue and support. Partners are the Eastern and Western European member countries as well as the private sector and civil society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my last point

26. I would like to emphasize that, for the provision of good guidance our decisions and recommendations must be clear, precise and forward-looking.

27. Finally, I would like to thank you for your attention, speaking on behalf of the Chair for the 29th ERC. Let me thank the Secretariat for its very helpful and substantial support and the work achieved so far. I am looking forward to a successful and fruitful debate today and tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention