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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Statement by the Chairperson of the Thirty-third Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to present to you the report on the Thirty-third Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC33), held in Santiago, Chile, on 6-9 May 2014, which I was privileged to preside over.

The first result of the Regional Conference that I would like to mention was the high level of participation and commitment displayed by member countries. The fact that it was attended by 31 Ministers and Vice Ministers of Agriculture, the Environment and Social Development, along with representatives from civil society, the private sector and international organisations, gave a special stamp of legitimacy and governance to the agreements reached and recommendations issued by the Regional Conference; and, two years on, there can be little doubt that it provided a stimulus for the region to move steadily towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of policies and regional regulatory matters, I am pleased to report that, during this period, the priorities set by the Regional Conference were addressed through the FAO work programme, with an emphasis on support for the institutional and policy frameworks on: (a) the eradication of hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and extreme poverty; (b) the sustainable production of goods and services in agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries in reducing risks and in improving livelihood resilience to threats and crises within the context of climate change; and (c) the inclusive and efficient development of agriculture and food systems at the local, national and international levels.

As the Regional Conference noted, FAO continued to support efforts by the countries and regional integration bodies to develop their respective policies, plans and strategies for food and nutrition security and poverty eradication. In that context, the Regional Conference highlighted the political commitment to combat hunger and poverty expressed by Heads of State and Government at the First and Second Summits of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Santiago, Chile in 2013 and in Havana, Cuba in 2014. This political commitment was reflected in one

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of the main achievements of this period, namely the formulation and implementation of the CELAC Plan for Food and Nutrition Security and Hunger Eradication 2025. This was approved at the Costa Rica Summit in January 2015, and its first progress report was recently presented at the CELAC Summit in Quito, Ecuador.

I would also like to highlight progress made in implementing the three Regional Initiatives approved by the Regional Conference: (1) Support to the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative; (2) Family Farming and Rural Territorial Development; and (3) Improvement of national and regional food and feed systems in the Caribbean. These Regional Initiatives made it possible to articulate the different FAO strategic objectives, on a coordinated basis and with a results-based planning approach, and to more efficiently support Member Nations in strengthening their institutional and policy framework for eradicating hunger and extreme poverty in the region.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, the Regional Conference mandate to give priority attention to crosscutting issues such as gender, rural youth and indigenous peoples received a powerful response in this period, in the framework of the Regional Initiatives and in the support provided for national policies for the social and economic inclusion of these vulnerable groups as an essential strategy for the reduction of inequality and for the sustainable development of rural territories.

Mr. Chairman, the Regional Conference stressed the importance of FAO support to Member Nations in improving the sustainable production of goods and services in agriculture, livestock, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, in reducing risks and an improving livelihood resilience within a context of climate change. Despite the progress made on this topic in several countries, and given the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, it may be necessary for the Regional Conference to recommend to FAO the establishment of a specific regional initiative to address this issue in greater depth in the next period. I will also like to stress that, in the CELAC framework, FAO made efforts to strengthen the agro-environmental policies of the region's Member Nations in simultaneously promoting rural poverty reduction and food security improvements, as well as actions of climate change mitigation and adaptation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Regional Conference recognized the need to promote the development of more inclusive and efficient agriculture and food systems at the local, national and international levels in impacting on the availability and accessibility of varied and nutritious food, and in simultaneously impacting on consumer information and consumer ability to opt for healthy diets. Further progress will need to be made on this issue under the Regional Initiatives in the next biennium in follow-up to the results of the International Conference on Nutrition, promoting the virtuous circle of agriculture-nutrition-health to be discussed during this session of the Regional Conference.

The Regional Conference requested FAO to mobilize resources through south-south and triangular cooperation, among other mechanisms, for the full implementation of the Regional Initiatives and the Country Programming Framework; and it gives me great satisfaction to note that major progress was made in this period, with major contributions being made by Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, my own country Chile, and others, on Food and Nutritional Security (FNS), family farming, and the management of climate and health risks. The Regional Conference also encouraged work by FAO in partnership with civil society and the private sector; and it tasked the Organization with continuing to strengthen links with the Committee on World Food Security and other regional and global fora dealing with food and nutrition security governance, a mandate that has been satisfactorily fulfilled.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to end this report as Chair of the Thirty-third Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean by thanking all Member Nations for their support, and asserting that, thanks to the strategic direction and leadership of the Organization at the global and regional levels, the recommendations of the Regional Conference, which I had the honour to preside over in the last two years, were achieved. I would also like to specially highlight the achievements of the Regional Initiatives and the south-south and triangular cooperation strategy implemented in the recent period. Presentations on several of these achievements will be made in the special events to be held during this session of the Regional Conference.

Thank you very much.