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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## Thirty-fifth Session

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 5-8 March 2018

### Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

Your Excellency, Director General of FAO,  
Your Excellencies, Ministers,  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors,  
Honourable delegates,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank FAO for inviting me to take part in this important meeting and to express my appreciation to the government officials of this wonderful country for their hospitality and excellent organization of this important event.

Mexico is participating in this 35th session of the Regional Conference in the firm conviction that the international community represented here has the political will and technical expertise to rise to the challenges facing countries in the region in relation to food production and consumption.

Two years ago, from 29 February to 3 March 2016, Mexico had the honour of hosting the 34th session of the conference, where a very lively debate took place that helped us to reach consensus on the recommendations on strategic and priority issues that we would make as a region.

I am pleased to report that the 2016 conference, chaired by Mexico, was attended by 25 ministers and 13 deputy ministers with different portfolios from 32 Member Nations. It was a successful meeting at which proposals were made to move forward together on the path to eradicating hunger and extreme poverty in the region, with FAO support.

The Conference identified and considered the following three issues as major policy challenges for the region:

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- a) food and nutrition security, within the context of the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- b) transformation of the rural sector, particularly in the areas of rural territorial development, family farming and socioeconomic inclusion and innovation;
- a) sustainable use of natural resources, risk management and climate change adaptation within the new framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Conference stressed the importance of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, embodied by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to tackle food security challenges in the twenty-first century, giving core value to the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and to the international agreements adopted by the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21).

The Conference also highlighted the importance of two regional agreements on food security:

- a) the Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger 2025 initiative;
- b) the 2025 Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Together, these commitments form a fundamental framework for the implementation of FAO's programme of work in the region for the coming years.

FAO's work in the context of its five Strategic Programs under the three Regional Initiatives has been commendable. The mechanism for implementing FAO's work has been further consolidated over the past biennium and the Secretariat is urged to continue to build on the progress made so far.

At the last Regional Conference, in 2016, FAO was called upon to support countries in preparing and monitoring indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, as, in the absence of reliable and consistent information, they would be unable to develop the policies needed to make effective progress.

I am convinced that the new FAO Strategic Framework, coupled with the Organization's ongoing transformation, make FAO well placed to do what the Member States have asked of it: to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

A key aspect for securing a hunger-free region is the strengthening of mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and governance to facilitate policy coordination and dialogue between governments, civil society and the private sector, which must provide for socioeconomic transformation of the rural sector, paying special attention to women, young people and indigenous peoples.

At the 2016 Conference, countries in the region reaffirmed FAO's role in the technical secretariats of the regional commissions and welcomed the recommendations of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission, Commission on Livestock Development for Latin America and the Caribbean, Commission for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and Caribbean and Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, which work to enhance the contribution of forestry, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture to reducing poverty and food insecurity, in order to help improve people's livelihoods, especially in family farming and small-scale fisheries.

FAO was also asked to support South-South and triangular cooperation strategies to aid the development of sustainable and healthy agrifood systems and the reduction of rural poverty in the region.

To achieve this, the Conference underlined the need to deepen support for differentiated policies, both for the forest sector and the most vulnerable populations that rely on forests, and for fisheries and aquaculture, with particular reference to artisanal fisheries.

To this end, it confirmed the need to promote family farming and rural development policies with a territorial focus, highlighting the importance of developing: innovative approaches and policies for rural development; agroecological policies that encourage responsible consumption and provide for disaster risk management, agricultural insurance, rural technical assistance, extension and communication; and social protection and rural employment.

It was considered essential for FAO to facilitate opportunities for policy dialogue and exchanges of experience among countries in the region, in order to promote better coordinated activities on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Accordingly, participating countries made an urgent appeal to work together to support prevention, mitigation and response to climate disasters and extreme events, for which the resilience of vulnerable populations needs to be built.

The Conference also emphasized the importance of supporting national agricultural health and food safety systems and called for the development of programmes to boost regional efforts to prevent, control and eradicate invasive species, pests and diseases.

In compliance with the express request of Caribbean countries to set in motion concrete collaborative actions for the benefit of the rural Caribbean, in October 2016 the first Meeting of Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture of Mexico and the Caribbean was held in Mérida, in the Mexican state of Yucatan, attended by ministers and deputy ministers representing 14 countries in that region.

The meeting defined strategic areas in the agrifood and fisheries sector on which to focus collaboration and Mexico's contribution to improving the region's food security.

As a result, it was decided to tackle health and disaster prevention as a priority. Mexico's response to this request was to conduct a training course and a number of technical visits in Mexico City and in Juarez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua in December 2017. Over the space of a week, 30 experts from 15 Caribbean countries were trained on: inspection of agrifood products at ports, airports and borders; geospatial information for disaster prevention and productive use; use of drones; preparing statistics; and accessing the mobile technology platform (applications).

As part of this cooperation, and pursuant to the commitments of the High-Level International Meeting on the Global Blue Growth Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City in November 2017, I am pleased to confirm Mexico's offer for the fisheries and oceanic research vessel Dr Jorge Carranza Fraser, of the National Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture, to conduct oceanographic and fishery resources assessment campaigns in Central American countries during this year's journey between the Atlantic and Pacific, which will include researchers from those sister nations, in order to contribute to the sustainability of fisheries and to building their capacity.

Over the course of this week, we shall have an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments and to strengthen joint work with FAO to improve technical cooperation and to mobilize the necessary resources to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in pursuit of a hunger-free Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mexico is honoured to have chaired the last FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, a forum that provided unequivocal proof of the key role of cooperation, exchanges and multilateral commitment in addressing and resolving the major issues of our time. I am sure that the 35th session of the FAO Regional Conference, chaired by Jamaica, will continue to build on the work done so far.

On behalf of the Government of Mexico, I wish every success to officials from our sister nation in the responsibility they are now taking on, while placing at their disposal the experience we have acquired in chairing the biennium now drawing to a close.

Thank you very much.