

43rd Session of the Conference

Introduction to Item 11.2: Report of the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 8-11 March 2022)

On behalf of the FAO Regional Conference of Asia and the Pacific, it is an honour and a pleasure to share with the Conference this introduction regarding the outcome of the 36th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. The 36th session was hosted by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and was the first of any FAO Regional Conference to convene both Senior Officials and Ministerial Sessions back-to-back, in hybrid modality, over four consecutive days. Over 1 100 participants registered, of which more than 400 registered to attend in-person. The Conference was completely digital and paperless, in keeping with the corporate policy on environmental sustainability.

It was also the first Regional Conference of any globally with in-person participation of Mr QU Dongyu, the Director-General of FAO. Ministers and Vice-Ministers representing 37 countries out of the region's membership of 45 delivered in-person or virtual statements during the plenaries. Six side events and three Ministerial Roundtables from Members anchored to agrifood systems transformation were organized.

The conference:

- Recognized that the Asia and the Pacific region has been seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed their commitment to a deep transformation of agrifood systems to regain lost ground on food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and unemployment.
- Emphasized the role of digitalization in transforming agrifood systems to be more inclusive and climate resilient.
- Highlighted the need for a more systemic and coordinated approach among key sectors and stakeholders in creating an enabling environment that makes the digitalization of agrifood systems more inclusive and sustainable, while addressing associated regulatory issues.
- Emphasized that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution for building climate resilient agrifood systems and to take into account that each nation has different levels of vulnerabilities and respective needs for development.
- Acknowledged the strategic role FAO has played in One Health to date, with technical support focused on zoonotic diseases, transboundary animal diseases, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and food safety, and the importance of its role in the Tripartite with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Emphasized the need for a more systematic and coordinated approach among key sectors and stakeholders for the sustainable management and utilization of biodiversity for food and agriculture in the Pacific region.
- Recognized the major actions carried out by FAO, the results achieved in 2020 and 2021 and the delivery and outcomes of FAO's work in the region, with over 500 projects having particularly adapted them to the context and conditions created by the unforeseen and unprecedented pandemic.
- Noted the transformational change in the Organization and its technical units, including at regional and country level, to address multifaceted development challenges.

- Endorsed the four Regional Priorities identified for the 2022–2023 biennium based on key trends, issues and challenges in the Asia and the Pacific region.
- Recognized the relevance of the individual Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) mapping onto each of the four Regional Priorities in the proposed results framework and for the achievement of the *four betters* to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Welcomed the initiation of the new FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031, its vision and Theory of Change and its alignment to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.
- Welcomed the development of the Organization's first-ever FAO Science and Innovation Strategy as a key tool to contribute to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and commended its transparent and inclusive consultation process.

Members of the Asia and the Pacific region are striving to overcome the lingering and ongoing impacts of the overlapping pandemic and the 5F (food, feed, fertilizer, fuel and finance) crises. They are shifting the development trajectory towards long-term transformative change of agrifood systems and making them more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, leaving no one behind.

Members emphasized that FAO's role in assisting, catalysing and accompanying Members through this will be critical, and FAO must go all-out to fulfil these high expectations.

The Honourable Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Chairperson of the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific