

April 2012



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Organización  
de las  
Naciones Unidas  
para la  
Alimentación y la  
Agricultura

# FAO Regional Conference for Africa

## TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION

**Brazzaville, Congo, 23-27 April 2012**

### STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

*Your Excellency Mr Chairperson of the Conference,*

*Your Excellency Mr Chairperson of the Council,*

*Your Excellency Mr Director-General of FAO,*

*Honourable Ministers,*

*Honourable Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and International Organizations,*

*Honourable Delegates,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The 26th FAO Regional Conference for Africa took place in Luanda, Angola, from 3 to 7 May 2010 and, I can say, represented the start of a new institutional governance framework for FAO in Africa. During the same period, Angola also assumed the Chair of the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) and the CPLP (Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries), mandates that synergistically amplified the impact of our action. Thus, it is with great pleasure that I present a summary of initiatives and activities undertaken by Angola as Chair since the 26th Conference and - on the basis of the results achieved - I will take the liberty to set out some challenges for the future.

The period as Chair of the 26th Conference was marked by important changes in the context of FAO's action in Africa, such as the start to implementing reform and the election of a new Director-General. There were also significant political, economic and social changes in the world and in many regions and countries in Africa. These changes and the challenges inherent in the need to "break new ground" were factors that influenced the actions that we undertook. These global and regional challenges, together with climate change, have had direct and indirect impacts on many countries of our region, particularly regarding rural development and the food security of our people.

Intensification of the global financial and economic crisis highlighted the need to further prioritize the development of agriculture in Africa and to enhance international governance, especially concerning the food system.

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Our continent suffered the impacts of these global processes, particularly the Horn of Africa. However, despite these factors, we need to emphasize the improved food and nutrition situation in some countries of the region, as a result of sound government policies and a new focus of investment on agriculture and food security in their development strategies. Allow me to mention, with modesty and by way of example, the countries of SAADC, which includes Angola, ECCAS and ECOWAS.

Among the activities pursued in this context, I would like to start by mentioning that, in accordance with a recommendation of the Regional Conference, Angola worked with the FAO Council and the African Union to establish a "Jacques Diouf Food Security Prize". Implementation of this award was supported by a special financial contribution from my country, as this was recognition of the work done by a great African and his work as Head of FAO and for Africa. In this regard, we would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of many African countries, which contributed to the realization of this recommendation.

We also worked with the FAO Regional Office for Africa and with the African Union, making efforts to help mobilize international resources, at regional and international levels, for immediate humanitarian assistance to the victims of the prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa. The people and Government of Angola were in solidarity with the affected countries, leading His Excellency the President of the Republic of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, to approve a financial contribution from Angola amounting to five million dollars.

Equally noteworthy was the fact that, anxious to implement the recommendations of the 26th FAO Conference for Africa, Angola sought to play a pro-active role as Chair with the group of representatives of African countries in Rome, organizing and/or facilitating meetings with the group, with sub-regional organizations and with multi- and bilateral development partners in Rome and Luanda, to discuss food security issues, in particular implementation of reform of the Committee on World Food Security (Recommendations 4 and 5 of the 26th Conference). Accordingly, we sought to operationalize the "ad hoc" group of countries aimed at linking the region with the CFS Bureau and to begin evaluating possible approaches for forging a more permanent relationship of the CFS with the Africa region, based on closer collaboration with the governing bodies of NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

Also within the context of our mandate and with political and financial support from FAO and the government of Angola, we participated in meetings, forums, consultation conferences and statutory bodies of the African Union, FAO and sub-regional organizations.

I would like to mention some of the meetings and initiatives that marked our term as Chair:

- The FAO Conference in Rome in 2011, during which the new Director-General of FAO, José Graziano da Silva, was elected and where I had the opportunity to present the conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Conference for Africa;
- The 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome in 2011, during which an African representative, Nigeria, was elected as its Chair. Angola and Zimbabwe were appointed members of this important body;
- The Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture in Lilongwe, Malawi, in 2011, which carried out a review of the CAADP implementation process and consultations with sub-regional organizations including SADC, ECCAS, CEMAC and ECOWAS;
- The Conference of Heads of State and Government of Africa on Agriculture and Food Security ("Dakar Agricole") held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2011;
- High-level missions in 2011 within the framework of bilateral cooperation with emerging countries (including Argentina, Brazil and Vietnam), where we sought to raise awareness and to promote public and private investment in agriculture in Africa, within the scope of South-South cooperation;
- Emergency meetings on drought and the food crisis in the Horn of Africa, which were held in Rome and Addis Ababa in 2011;
- The Meeting of African Ministers of Agriculture in Berlin, Germany, in 2012.

- The Meeting of CPLP focal points for food and nutrition security which took place in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2011, for technical approval of the Community's Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy. This strategy was subsequently presented at the 37th session of the Committee on World Food Security as an example for future reflection on CFS linkage with Regional Policy Coordination and/or Economic Integration Organizations;
- A high-level mission to African Union headquarters and to the FAO Regional Office to promote reflection on the linkage of the Committee on World Food Security with the African Union and the CAADP, to facilitate and strengthen dialogue between the AU and FAO and to discuss the provisional agenda of the 27th Conference, on the basis of suggestions put forward by the group of African country representatives at FAO in Rome;
- The Meeting of African Ministers of Agriculture in Rome, in February 2012, to present a preliminary assessment of Angola's chairpersonship of the Regional Conference for Africa.
- A meeting in Luanda in April 2012 with the Minister of Agriculture of the Congo to exchange experiences and thus assist the organization of the 27<sup>a</sup> Regional Conference in this pleasant and welcoming city of Brazzaville.

These initiatives were not, of course, an end in themselves. They represented our best effort to strengthen previous initiatives. Within the intrinsic limitations of a first term in the framework of recent FAO reform, we hope that they will serve as seeds that we, the Member States, will be able to nurture and develop.

In this connection, I should mention the challenges that lie ahead in implementing FAO reform, including the realization of decentralization, the streamlining of the Organization, and the active participation of Member States in its governing bodies, including in determining strategic objectives, priorities that reflect the concerns of groups most vulnerable to food insecurity in our region, and their corresponding funding.

There is also a need to further strengthen the effective governance of food and nutrition security and greater operationalization of the Committee on World Food Security. Accordingly, as discussed by the African representatives in Rome, Angola will continue to contribute to efforts to facilitate the work of the "ad hoc" group of countries constituted during the 26th Conference. As we hand over our mandate as Chair, I would like to unequivocally express our commitment to support the new Chair in any appropriate manner. In this connection, I will also present to this Conference, in my report which is available for consultation and which is based on lessons learned during our mandate, a series of reflections aimed at improving existing mechanisms for exercise of the role of Chair.

FAO support through a Technical Cooperation Project is important and should be maintained. Such a project should be formulated and approved as early as possible so that its actions can be implemented after the Regional Conference.

Without undermining the autonomy that the mandate requires, FAO could also develop guidelines to support the role of Chair, so that its terms of reference are clearly defined and, through synergy, can help put into effect the conclusions of the Regional Conferences. The outgoing Chair should therefore share its experiences with the new Chair.

It would be useful if the "ad hoc" group of countries to link the African region with the CFS Bureau could be kept in operation until appropriate linkage between that body and the African Union is finalized, on the basis of a study to be conducted as soon as possible.

Equally important, regular contact should be maintained between the new Chair, the Africa Group in Rome and appropriate multilateral organizations to determine agenda items for the Conference.

To conclude, I would like once again to congratulate the new Director-General of FAO, José Graziano da Silva, and to assure him of Angola's willingness to continue to support, in the region, his efforts to improve food and nutrition security and to completely eradicate hunger.

I would like to thank our host, the Government of the Republic of the Congo, for having organized this Conference and for providing us with excellent working facilities and accommodation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in particular the FAO Regional Office for Africa and its Director Helena Semedo, the FAO Representation in Angola for its continuous and daily work with the national committee of support to the Chair of the Conference, the Africa Group in Rome, all development partners and those responsible for hosting this successful conference, for the enormous support received during the course of the work accomplished by Angola. I am sure that our collective effort will allow us to continue fighting for agricultural and rural development in Africa and for the effective realization of the most basic human right – the right to adequate food.

I should like to add a word of appreciation and thanks to the Honourable Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forests and Food Security of Africa. I received from each of them the support, collaboration and advice that we needed for the exercise of our mandate.

I have no doubt whatsoever that my successor, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Republic of the Congo, will receive the same warmth and support during the course of his mandate. I take this opportunity to wish him every success.

Thank you very much.