

April 2014



منظمة الأغذية
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联合国
粮食及
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Food and
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Organization
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Organisation des
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pour
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Продовольственная и
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Organización
de las
Naciones Unidas
para la
Alimentación y la
Agricultura

Regional Conference for Europe

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Bucharest, Romania, 2 - 4 April 2014

Agenda Item 4

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Director-General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Delegates, it is a privilege for me to participate in this 29th Regional Conference for Europe, and to speak to you on some of the major issues that impact on the work of our Organization at the start of the 2014-2015 biennium.

At the outset allow me to convey appreciation to you Mr Chairman, and through you to your Government and to the people of Romania, for the hospitality provided to all participants here in the wonderful Palace of Parliament in the beautiful and historical city of Bucharest.

This being my first address to this Regional Conference since being elected as the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council by the FAO Conference in June last year, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude for that mark of confidence.

I have taken up this position with great dedication, and I am committed to steering the Council towards more focused and effective deliberations, engaging with Members and FAO Management on the key issues, in order to find the common ground and move together in a spirit of reciprocal trust and consensus building - as exemplified by the recent launch of the preparatory process for the Second International Conference on Nutrition, and the Independent Review of Governance Reform and in other informal consultative meetings I have had with Members

Member's interest, sense of ownership and engagement in the work of FAO is greater than ever as the Organization tackles the increasingly complex and persistent challenges of extreme

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poverty, food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition and environmental threats against a background of resource limitations.

In my first six months of office I have had many opportunities to witness such renewed commitment by the Members, not least during the reformulation of the Organization's Strategic Objectives, followed up by the transformational changes process initiated by Dr. Graziano, the Director-General of FAO. Another positive development also came from the FAO Staff Bodies in their statement to the Council in December 2013 by committing themselves to achieve the challenging goals of the Organization.

Excellencies, the renewed Strategic Framework and Programme of Work and Budget for 2014-2015 also reflect the regional priorities formulated by you at the Regional Conference held two years ago, such as the Programmatic Regional Initiative "Agrarian structure in Europe and Central Asia Region" (Strategic Objective 4).

The implementation of the PWB for 2014-2015 began in January 2014, after the December 2013 session of Council had endorsed adjustments to the PWB, in accordance with the decision and guidance of the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013. Implementation will require dedicated and concerted efforts both by FAO staff, at all levels, and the Members. At the same time, planning has to start this year for the programmes for the 2016-17 biennium. Hence the need for inputs and clear guidance from Technical Committees and Regional Conferences, in keeping with their role as FAO Governing Bodies.

That said, I should also mention how encouraged I am to see progress in the way Regional Conference guidance is reported back to the Council and the Conference and the engagement and follow-up of decisions during the inter-sessional period. This is still work in progress, but I believe we are on track as I have seen that the way regional perspectives are taken into consideration continues to be fine-tuned.

Of course, much depends on the clarity of the guidance contained in the Report you will be submitting both to the June 2015 session of Conference on policy and regulatory issues, and to the June 2014 session of Council on programme policies.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, the Report of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO in 2007 highlighted governance as central to a strengthened FAO, if the Organization is to meet the expectations of its Members. As you know, the follow-up Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal, driven by the Members, was subsequently implemented from 2010 to 2013.

You may also recall that the Immediate Plan of Action envisaged a comprehensive review of progress on governance reforms and their effectiveness after a six year period. So, in December 2013 the Council endorsed arrangements for an Independent Review of Governance Reform, as well as the appointment of Ms Maxine Olson and Ms Nadia Hijab to the review team for this exercise.

The review team is interacting with Members at selected Governing Body sessions, and the outcome of its review will serve as input to the discussion and assessment of governance reforms by the Conference in 2015.

Ms Nadia Hijab, Review Team member, is present at this Regional Conference and will be interfacing with as many of you as possible to seek your views on progress made so far in the implementation of Governance Reform. I would urge you to attend and participate actively in the side

event discussion on Governance Reform taking place tomorrow afternoon from 17:30 to 19:00 in the Human Rights Room, Palace of Parliament.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, as I am sure you know, and as already mentioned by the FAO Director-General in his speech, I want to add my voice and repeat the reminder to you that this year FAO, together with the World Health Organization (WHO), will convene the Second International Conference on Nutrition from 19 to 21 November at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

The preparations for this important event are in progress. Your interest, engagement and support during the preparations as well as your presence and active participation at Conference will help mobilize the levels of international cooperation needed for more effective action to end malnutrition.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, your region has demonstrated its renewed emphasis on agriculture and on key focus areas such as “Food losses and waste in Europe and Central Asia”, a topic of the Ministerial Round Table, “Agri-Food Systems for Better Nutrition or Risk-based Drought Management” and “Cooperatives and their Alternatives”, the topics which were discussed during the European Commission on Agriculture meeting which preceded this Conference and which provided information on building value chains in the region, including smallholder farming. I warmly congratulate you on all these very important initiatives.

Indeed, in concluding, let me reiterate that it is exactly this renewed emphasis on agriculture that makes it the duty of this Regional Conference to indicate clear and concrete priorities for the Europe Region.

I firmly believe that the continuing engagement, commitment and leadership of the governments in this Region will do much to ensure that FAO continues to serve you well, and to be an effective agent in the struggle to free the world of hunger and malnutrition.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to address the 29th European Regional Conference.

Thank you.