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منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة للأمم
المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and
Agriculture
Organization
of the
United Nations

Organisation des
Nations Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

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 3

Statement by the Director-General of FAO

Your Excellency Mr Daniel Constantin, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania and Chairperson of the 29th FAO Regional Conference
Mr. Wilfred Ngirwa, Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council,
Your Excellency Mr Dacian Ciolos, European Commissioner for Agriculture,
Your Excellencies Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Ministers and Vice-Ministers, Permanent Representatives and Delegates,
Civil society representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would like to start by saying that, since our last meeting in Baku two years ago, we have seen progress in the fight against hunger in the world, but the challenge to guarantee sustainable food security for all is still there.
2. Around 60 developing countries have already reached the MDG One hunger target or have brought their undernourishment rates under 5 percent.
3. In the European, Caucasus and Central Asian region, the vast majority of countries have already brought undernourishment rates below five percent.
4. We are committed to helping Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reach this threshold as well.
5. I am sure we can do it with the support of the region. I would like to add that, today, the biggest nutrition challenge for the region is related to obesity and over-nutrition.
6. It is FAO's responsibility to help you address the full range of malnutrition issues. Let me take the opportunity to invite all the delegations to our second conference on nutrition, that will be held in FAO next November.
7. The renewal that FAO is undergoing has to do exactly with this: transforming FAO into an Organization that can give a decisive contribution to the sustainable food secure future we want.
8. This means adapting FAO and our work to today's challenges and needs. And one of the biggest threats to achieving food security, and to our future itself, is climate change.

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9. You are certainly aware of the new report released this week by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
10. The report shows many things. I want to focus on two of them.
11. First, it confirms that the climate is already changing. That means that we need to step up our efforts to mitigate, to adapt and, most importantly, to shift to more sustainable food systems. This is one of our core responsibilities.
12. Second, the world's poorest are particularly vulnerable. Not only do they have fewer means to react, but the impact of climate change on agricultural production will be felt harder in the already marginal production areas in which they live.
13. FAO Governing Bodies, Regional Conferences and Technical Committees have played a critical role in shaping FAO's priorities and making it a fitter Organization to overcome the challenges of the 21st Century.
14. You gave valuable inputs regarding the institutional strengthening of FAO, decentralization and the strategic thinking process.
15. At this meeting, we will report back to you on the work that has been done over the past 24 months and present to you what is next on our horizon.
16. Let us start by taking a quick look at some of the things we have done together. I want to call your attention to five issues.
17. First, we have successfully concluded the FAO reform, leaving us with stronger internal governance, planning and delivery.
18. Second, we articulated and organized ourselves to focus on five Strategic Objectives and maintain the technical quality of our work, delivering a truly results-based work program of work and budget.
19. Third, we have developed clear strategies for partnering with the private sector and civil society.
20. Fourth, we are injecting our decentralized offices with more manpower and expertise. And decentralization has been accompanied by greater responsibility and accountability made possible by a unified management system.
21. And I want to stress that decentralization did not and does not mean the weakening of our global technical capacity and normative support.
22. Not only has our technical capacity been preserved. It now has a framework for action that will allow it to give a greater contribution to the goals and objectives you have set for our Organization.
23. I want to reaffirm that FAO's work can only be really successful, in the field or in the global setting, when field activities and global public goods are connected and mutually enriching complements.
24. That is what we are doing to become an Organization with its feet on the ground.
25. And finally, fifth, we are doing more with less by reducing costs, increasing efficiency and constantly searching to increase the value for money of our work.
26. Since I took up office, FAO has found efficiency gains and savings of over 100 million dollars.
27. We have met the targets established by the Governing Bodies and have been able to reinvest the surplus in the substantive work of the Organization.
28. This means, for example, that we were able to strengthen our decentralized presence without weakening our global technical capacity and without the need for extra funding.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

29. The changes that FAO has undergone have a direct impact on the support we offer at the regional, subregional and national levels.

30. We have strengthened our team in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia by establishing new positions for food security and climate change, and redefining 15 positions to improve our skills mix and better respond to the needs identified in the previous regional conference.

31. In addition, two new fully fledged representations have been opened in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the two countries that have not yet achieved the first Millennium Development Goal. Our offices in Moldova and Uzbekistan are in the process of being upgraded. Progress is being made in adding a partnership function to our Subregional Office in Turkey.

32. Substance-wise, we are aligning our work in the region based on the reviewed strategic framework, regional and national priorities.

33. We have completed the revision of the Country Programming Frameworks in five countries in the region: Armenia, Georgia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan.

34. CPFs are being prepared and should soon be completed in another 11 countries in the region.

35. These changes at the global and regional level better equip FAO to respond to the priorities that you have defined and to provide the support you expect and deserve.

36. And, despite the differences among the countries in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, there are issues that are common to all of you.

37. They include the challenges of:

- addressing malnutrition, from hunger to obesity;
- reducing food loss and waste, which will be the subject of your ministerial roundtable;
- Controlling animal, plant and food borne pests and diseases;
- strengthening sustainable family farming and small-scale production; and
- building resilience in the face of climate change.

38. Helping you to respond to these challenges is at the core of our work in the region.

39. To complement the support we are giving to you in these areas and within our reviewed strategic framework, FAO is implementing two new regional initiatives in the region.

40. The first regional initiative aims to reduce rural poverty by supporting family farmers and smallholders, and falls nicely within the framework of the International Year of Family Farming.

41. Its activities include support at the farm and community level to:

- adopt sustainable production technologies;
- foster processes that address land tenure issues, in line with the CFS approved Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure;
- promote access to markets; diversify incomes; and
- strengthen the capacities of rural institutions.

42. At governance level, activities will include support to the formulation of policies, strategies and frameworks that support family farming and small-scale production and building capacity.

43. It is also important to mention that this initiative is linked to ongoing policy processes such as the European Neighborhood Program for Agriculture and Rural Development.

44. The second initiative builds on the successful Agrarian Structures Initiative piloted during 2013.

45. It will support the development of agri-food trade and deepen regional integration by its linkage to the processes of multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations.

46. Its activities will include:
- Developing better evidence of the implications of trade agreements for the agri-food sector, including WTO accession and European Union;
 - Improving the capacity of the countries to engage more effectively in regional and international agricultural trade.
47. Besides the individual merits of these two regional initiatives, they will also contribute to other processes.
48. They include resilience building, adaptation to climate change, and combating food loss and waste, which is as big a problem in Europe as in the rest of the world.
49. IF we could reduce food loss and waste we would have greater availability of food without the need to produce more.
50. Given the increasing land and water constraints the world faces and the effects of climate change, this is a huge difference.
51. And it also helps explain why we need to promote sustainability in both production and consumption to reach the future we want.
52. Ladies and gentlemen,
53. I want to acknowledge that we are being ambitious in many different ways. We are pushing ourselves forward. And that is what we need right now.
54. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the world produces enough food but that one in eight human beings is still denied the right to food.
55. We cannot lose sight of the need to transform our food systems to meet the challenge of ensuring food security and sustainability.
56. This region has an important contribution to give in reaching these goals, not only in funding, but also in sharing its experience and giving political and technical support.
57. I would like to end by thanking all of you for attending this 29th FAO Regional Conference for Europe. And thanking you for the support you have given to FAO and to my work.
58. We have done a lot together, and this has been made possible by the rebuilt trust among Members and Management.
59. This is not something that we take for granted, and we work every day to show the results that we have agreed on, so as to keep on deserving your confidence.
60. I trust in your continued support.
61. I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to receiving your guidance for our work in the region. Thank you for your attention.