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**Thirty-seventh Session of
the Regional Conference
for Asia and the Pacific**

19–22 February 2024
Colombo, Sri Lanka



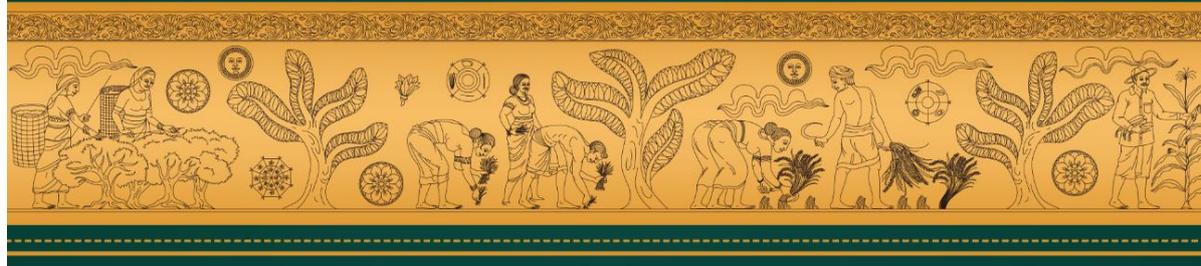
**Trente-septième session
de la Conférence régionale
pour l'Asie et le Pacifique**

19–22 février 2024
Colombo (Sri Lanka)



**Тридцать седьмая сессия
Региональной конференции
для Азии и Тихого океана**

19–22 февраля 2024 года
Коломбо, Шри-Ланка



**Plenary Session-Prioritization of country and regional needs
Country Statements by Ministers
(Agenda Item 14)**

AUSTRALIA	3
BANGLADESH	5
BHUTAN	7
CAMBODIA	9
CHINA	11
FIJI	13
FRANCE	15
INDIA	19
INDONESIA	21
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN (THE)	23
JAPAN	25
LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (THE)	27
MALAYSIA	29
MALDIVES	31
MARSHALL ISLANDS	33
NAURU	34
NEPAL	36
NEW ZEALAND	38
NIUE	40
PAKISTAN	43

PALAU	44
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	46
PHILIPPINES	48
REPUBLIC OF KOREA	50
RUSSIAN FEDERATION (THE)	52
SAMOA	56
SINGAPORE	58
SRI LANKA	59
THAILAND	62
TIMOR-LESTE	64
TONGA	66
VANUATU	68
VIET NAM	69

AUSTRALIA

Thank you chair and good afternoon everybody.

Ministers, distinguished delegates, excellencies, and ladies and gentlemen.

It is my privilege to address you as the representative for Australia's Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt. The Minister apologises for being unable to join you here today.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, the traditional owners of our land, as our first farmers, fishers and foresters, from whom we can learn so much. I pay my respects to Indigenous peoples from across the world, including those participating in this week's conference.

The Asia Pacific region is the largest in the FAO system, with the highest population and stretching across ecosystems with vastly different challenges and opportunities. This conference is a moment to consider and take concrete steps towards ensuring our agri-food systems help realise the UN's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals.

However, alleviating hunger remains out of reach for many. In Australia, we are deeply concerned for the millions of people suffering from food insecurity and extreme hunger across the region, and the world.

There is a mutual relationship between sustainable agricultural productivity growth, free and open trade settings, and improved global food security.

Transparent, predictable, open and fair markets, underpinned by an effective multilateral trading system, are all vital in achieving food security. This system allows Australia to supply around 60 million tonnes of food each year to more than 150 markets worldwide, helping to address food insecurity, particularly across our region.

However, today multiple conflicts are impacting global food markets and seriously exacerbating food insecurity. Just and enduring resolutions to conflicts will have a marked impact on global hunger.

Climate change and environmental degradation also represents another significant challenge to global food security. This is of particular concern to the Southwest Pacific region, which is already experiencing the significant impacts of changing weather patterns.

In this regard, Australia strongly supports the Pacific Community's Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees, a regional gene bank to strengthen Pacific island countries and territories' resilience of food and nutrition security to the impacts of disasters and climate change through technology development and technical advisory support services. Ensuring that policy is science- and evidence-based along the lines of this initiative ensures that solutions are targeted and effective.

Ministers, environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies also continue to hinder our collective efforts to delivering a more sustainable future. They impede sustainable agricultural development, damage the environment, distort agricultural trade and are harmful for farmers.

Imagine the strides we could collectively make if harmful agricultural support were repurposed towards climate-smart agriculture, including through greater investment in innovation, research and development. Agricultural productivity would increase, more sustainable agri-food systems would result, and global food security would improve.

Australia's experience shows that agricultural output and food production can be sustainably increased by adopting a science- and evidence-based approach, without harmful and distorting agricultural subsidies.

Chair, I do wish to highlight FAO's normative and standard setting work, which provides an essential knowledge base grounded in science and evidence. Australia calls on the FAO to invest more of its

core budget into CODEX Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Commission to enable them to fulfil their important mandates.

Building on this, I encourage the FAO to improve data collection and analysis, particularly in the Southwest Pacific, to inform the development of policies, strategies and projects that are fit for purpose for this region. To meet the needs of all, we must also ensure greater inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth across agriculture's value chains.

Our region is diverse, and while we share common goals, no two countries can have the same path to sustainability.

That is why Australia promotes an outcomes-focused, commonsense, 'no one-size-fits-all' approach to sustainable agriculture. This supports economic, environmental and social outcomes while also acknowledging the diversity of circumstances between countries – and within a country – in regard to production types, geographical differences, climate and ecology.

Australia is proud of the innovations being implemented by our farmers – this is part of their DNA as stewards of our land reflected in their commitment to sustainability, and reducing emissions.

Australia's red meat industry – for example – has been an early leader, committing to carbon neutral production by 2025. And the Australian Government stands shoulder-to-shoulder with our industry, committing to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Climate, soil, water, biosecurity, biodiversity, food safety, nutrition, and international trade – they are all interlinked and essential to resilient and sustainable agricultural production. We must all work together towards a sustainable future – governments, academia, the private sector, and farmers, fishers and foresters – to deliver the outcomes required.

FAO's work in Asia and the Pacific, as a knowledge hub and convening authority, plays a key role in bringing this all together as we strive to achieve zero global hunger.

In concluding Chair, Australia is committed to working with you all at the FAO, through our funding commitments, technical contributions, and in partnership with members across Asia and the Pacific. We stand with you, working towards FAO's strategic objectives – better production, better nutrition, better environment, and a better life.

Thank you Chair.

BANGLADESH

Respected Chair and Excellencies,

Good afternoon!

I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to talk on prioritization of country and regional needs. I take this privilege to express Bangladesh views on this very important and substantive agenda.

Excellences,

Let me congratulate the FAO officials first for a very informative and integrated paper on prioritization.

I do agree with the proposition of transformation of agriculture to a more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems that has emphasis on the approach of 'leaving no one behind'. The identified four Regional Priorities have although rightly acknowledged the cross-cutting priority areas, it requires some adjustments to address the diversities in challenges and interventions required at country and regional level.

The issue of sustainable production for promoting the approach of SDGs, 'leaving no one behind' requires urgent attention to availability of inputs at an affordable price in the context of global price volatility of fertilizer and fuel. LDCs and developing countries need special assistance in this regard and better coordination among input producing countries may be of help to the vulnerable economies that have dependency on agriculture. The member countries should focus on their own food security; however, they also need to be concerned to their friendly countries during any crisis. A systematic exchange of information on production and demand of food across the globe may help address the challenge of distribution and politics should not play any role through export restrictions when ensuring food security becomes critical to any member countries.

Distinguished Delegates,

I do agree that we need to take collaborative efforts for enhanced interventions for sustainable natural resources management, inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies. This will however require FAO's intervention in some areas at national and regional level considering the context of variation among member countries, such as poor natural resource base, low crop productivity, climate vulnerability, inadequate availability and supply of quality inputs, inadequate extension services, high post-harvest losses, inappropriate market access and dominance of market intermediaries, poor agro-processing, value chain, shortage of farm labourers and slow mechanization, resurgence of pests and diseases, and trans-boundary diseases and yield gap and adoption lag etc. In addition to identified areas, the prioritization may also focus on:

- Research support in climate resilient genetic innovations and technology development; nutrition enriched variety development;
- Mechanization and commercialization;
- Wider adoption of 4 Industrial Revolution technologies and Digitization;
- Investment in capacity building for safe and quality food production;
- Agro processing, storage, SPS issues, testing, inspection and certification; and
- Ensuring production of enough staples and diversifying the non-crop sector.

Excellences,

I expect that the priorities should be relevant to interventions required for addressing limitations of member countries like Bangladesh and that could ensure enhanced participation of stakeholders. I assure you that, in cooperation with FAO, our very trusted development partner, the Ministry of Agriculture will always be there to support all regional priorities for ensuring better life for all in Asia and Pacific region.

Thank you all!

BHUTAN



Statement by
Hon'ble Lyonpo Younten Phuntsho,
Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific,
Colombo, Sri Lanka, 19-21 February 2024

Hon'ble Chairperson
Excellencies, the Ministers from the Asia-Pacific Region,
Director General, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Kuzuk Zangpo and a very Good Afternoon!

With a profound sense of privilege, I stand here to deliver the country statement this afternoon.

At the outset, I have the honor to extend the warmest greetings from His Majesty the King and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan.

Likewise, I would like to formally congratulate YE Mr. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries, Government of Sri Lanka, on your successful election as the Chair of the 37th session of FAO Asia Pacific Regional Conference.

I am also deeply grateful to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting this important conference in this beautiful capital city of Colombo and for the warm hospitality extended to me and all the delegates attending the session.

Let me also express my appreciation to the DG of FAO for his exemplary leadership in steering FAO and for supporting Bhutan and the member countries.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I stated yesterday, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that this is in fact, my first official engagement outside Bhutan. Therefore, I look forward to strengthening our partnership with FAO and rest of the partners gathered here. And I am optimistic that we can together realize our mutual interests and further our collaboration.

Likewise, I stand here, delighted to share Bhutan's vision for a prosperous and resilient future, where every citizen enjoys the right to a healthy and fulfilling life. Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan, with the theme - "Towards a Resilient and Sustainable Bhutan," aims to double our GDP and ensure food and nutrition security for all.

We envision a Bhutan where farmers thrive, not just survive. Our focus is on enhancing food and nutrition security by:

1. Achieving self-sufficiency in essential commodities,
2. Boosting production of high-value agricultural and livestock commodities,

3. Innovating and embracing agri-tech to combat climate change and its impacts,
4. Empowering women and children,
5. Building resilience to shocks and stressors across the food system network.

In pursuing our vision, we have developed our strategy, "Bhutan National Pathways – Food Systems for GNH Transformative Pathways for Bhutan," which aligns well with the Sustainable Development Goals and Bhutan's Low Emission Development Strategy.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Recognizing the importance of achieving food security through sustainable agricultural practices, our government plans to embark on ambitious yet achievable targets. We will undertake numerous innovative actions towards realizing the vision of a sustainable food system for the inclusive socio-economic well-being of all Bhutanese. Our government stands committed to revamping our agriculture systems for the achievement of the bold transformation plans and SDG goals.

Despite many challenges, we recognize that agriculture can be a key solution in addressing many of the problems faced today, such as income disparity, unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, poverty, etc.

However, we cannot achieve our agri-food transformation initiatives alone. It requires the support and collaboration of all partners and member countries. Therefore, I call for commitments and concerted efforts to address the challenges and agri-transformation goals.

In conclusion, let me acknowledge FAO's commitment and proactive support to Bhutan. I am convinced that its flagship initiatives, such as the "hand-in-hand initiative", OCOP, and "digital village initiative," will be of great benefit to the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly for Bhutan. Hence, I express our gratitude to **DG and his able team including Mr. Ken Shimizu**, the Country Rep to Bhutan, for all the support extended to Bhutan and look forward to enhanced collaboration.

With this, once again, I thank the Government of Sri Lanka for warm hospitality and FAO for the amazing coordination of the conference here.

Finally, I wish everyone a very fruitful deliberations and the 37th APRC every success.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.

CAMBODIA

Cambodia Country Statement by
His Excellency Prak David, Secretary of State
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)
Ministerial Level Session of the 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)
19-22 February 2024, Colombo, Sri Lanka

- Excellency Mahinda Amaraweera, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and Chairperson of the Regional Conference,
- Excellency QU Dongyu, Director-General of FAO,
- Excellency Ministers and delegations from the Asia and Pacific countries, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of the Royal Government of Cambodia, it is my pleasure and privilege to deliver this statement at the 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. Cambodia extends our appreciation and gratitude to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for hosting the Conference, and to FAO for unwavering supports to make this event possible.

Cambodia has made significant achievements in overall agricultural production and good progress on nutrition targets, such as the reduction in child stunting and prevalence of undernourishment. Nevertheless, there remains more challenges to be addressed especially in the face of climate change and growing uncertainty.

The Ministry takes a leading role in the responsibility to provide food security for all Cambodians and contributes to supply foods on international markets. Efforts to facilitate agrifood trade should be further promoted. Moreover, the ministry remains dedicated to ensuring economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability for its people, as directed under the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 2024-2028.

Our commitment is reinforced by key programs (1) financing initiatives to boost productivity and stabilize prices for key commodities, (2) deployment of 1,600 extension officers for grassroots support, and (3) the establishment of modern agricultural communities to enhance efficiency and scale. These initiatives empower farmers, foster innovation, and ensure a resilient agricultural sector for Cambodia's future.

Considering the limited timeframe, I wish to highlight specific priorities that require investments and participations from public, private, and development partners:

Cambodia welcomes more investments to develop local processing capacities and value chain to unlock the economic potentials of our large and reliable scale production, supporting inclusive rural economies. With strengths in producing premium rice, cashew nuts, pepper and other high-quality agricultural products, we aim to continue building Cambodia's reputation for the supply of safe, nutritious, and quality produce to domestic and international markets. With a robust investment-friendly legal framework in place, we encourage all stakeholders, particularly the private sector, to explore the enticing prospects within the value chain, especially focusing on downstream industry.

Modern Agricultural Communities play a key role in enhancing productivity, increasing income, and improving livelihood for farmers. Establishing these communities requires start-up funds or loans to invest in infrastructures, equipment, and management team. Access to financial support enables

farmers to collaborate, share resources, and adopt sustainable practices, laying the groundwork for thriving agricultural ecosystems and resilient communities.

Capture fisheries and aquaculture also play crucial roles in providing food security, nutrition and livelihoods of Cambodian people. Ongoing reforms underscore the significance of sustainable practices in these sectors. We need stronger regional cooperation and initiatives to address key issues in marine and inland fisheries including the IUU fishing. For aquaculture, we call for investment into hatchery, feed production, processing and SPS system to make local production profitable and sustainable.

Lastly, with multiple crisis, we are facing financing gaps and lack of financial solutions to spark the agrifood system transformation. It is critical to develop tailored financing solutions to accelerate the advancement of sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, Cambodia stands at a critical juncture in its development journey. As we look to the future, we are guided by a steadfast commitment to ensuring food security, promoting economic prosperity, and safeguarding our environment for future generations. Through strategic investments, targeted policies, and international cooperation, we are confident that we can overcome the challenges that lie ahead and realize our vision of a prosperous and sustainable Cambodia for all as well as to achieving the SDGs by 2030.

With this, I thank you very much for your kind attention.

CHINA

Speech at the Plenary Sessions of the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Item: Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs

Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China

Respected Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished Ministers,

Dear Delegates,

Good afternoon!

It gives me great pleasure to join you in Colombo, a city known as the “Crossroads of the East”, to discuss with you agricultural and rural development and food security in the Region.

I am grateful that FAO, by organizing this meeting, creates a platform for communication in the Asia-Pacific Region. I sincerely thank the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries of Sri Lanka for the thoughtful arrangements. I would also like to congratulate Minister Amaraweera on his election as the Chairperson of this Session.

China always prioritizes food security, and strives to power its agricultural sector, enrich its farmers and invigorate the rural areas, as it continues to develop supportive and favorable policies for agriculture and the farmers.

Great achievements have thus been made in agricultural and rural development.

For nine consecutive years, China has secured an annual grain production of more than 650 million tons. It has ensured the stable supply of grain and other key agricultural produce, and relies on itself to control over its own food supply.

Farmers' income has been on the rise. With absolute poverty eradicated, last year the per capita disposable income of rural residents in China reached USD 3,015.

Agricultural technology and equipment have developed to a new level. The area of high-standard farmland has totaled 60 million hectares in China. The contribution of scientific and technological progress to agricultural growth has exceeded 63%. Two million farm machines have been equipped with the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System. And more than 200 thousand drones have been applied in plant protection.

Green development of the agricultural sector has gained momentum. Chemical fertilizer and pesticide have been used more efficiently. The recycling rates of livestock and poultry waste, straw, and agricultural plastic film have hit 78%, 88% and 80%, respectively. 97.8% of agricultural products have passed the national quality and safety inspection.

Rural living environment has been steadily improving. Over 73% of China's rural population now has access to sanitary toilets. More than 40% of rural domestic sewage has been recycled. Household refuse has been collected, transported and treated in over 91% of the administrative villages.

Over the years, Asia-Pacific countries have made unremitting efforts to improve food security and have delivered notable results. Despite this, FAO's latest statistics show that around 370 million people are undernourished in this Region, representing half of the world's figure. The task on our

shoulders remains arduous. China will continue to ramp up cooperation with other countries to enhance regional and global food security, in pursuit of early achievement of Zero Hunger and other Sustainable Development Goals.

To that end, I wish to propose the following.

First, we need to put development first, and improve comprehensive agricultural production capacity. Countries should scale up investment in agricultural science, technology, and innovation based on their national realities, especially in cropland quality, agricultural machinery, biological breeding, digital agriculture, food safety, and reduction of food loss and waste. Such measures will reinforce the foundation for food security and give impetus to agricultural modernization.

Second, we need to pursue green development of agriculture and greater resilience of agri-food systems. All sides should be further committed to transformation, and support FAO's global initiatives such as the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy and the FAO Strategy on Climate Change. More efforts should be made to build a green, low-carbon and circular agricultural industrial system, so that agriculture could be more nature-based as its nature suggests.

Third, we need to take a people-centered approach, and strengthen the smallholders for them to prosper on their own. We should always focus on the people's concerns and go all out to increase farmers' income. We should better align smallholder farming and the development of modern agriculture, including by improving commercial agricultural services as well as financial and insurance services for smallholder farmers.

Lastly, I wish the Session a full success. Thank you all!

FIJI

Bula vinaka and Ayubowan (hello is Sri Lankan)

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for hosting the 37th APCR Ministerial Conference. It is indeed an honour to be here in person and address the 37th Ministerial Conference of the UNFAO on behalf of the Republic of Fiji.

Honorable Ministers, as a nation, Fiji is deeply connected to the land and the sea and therefore recognises the vital importance of sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forests in ensuring food security, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability for its people and future generations

Fiji is also a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and faces numerous structural challenges in sustainably developing its agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors and is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. All of these impact the food and nutrition security and livelihoods of our people. Building resilience in our agri-food systems is therefore a critical priority for Fiji.

Fiji has prioritised the implementation of adaptation strategies to build resilience in the face of extreme weather events and changing environmental conditions by promoting and investing in climate-smart agriculture techniques such as agroforestry, use of drought resistant crop varieties and water management practices to ensure the long term viability of our agricultural sector.

Fiji is also dedicated to sustainable capture fisheries and aquaculture practices that ensure the long-term health of its marine resources and support the livelihoods of its coastal communities. Fiji is working to promote responsible fishing practices and sustainable aquaculture development to meet the growing demand for seafood while preserving our oceans for future generations.

Fiji has been a signatory to the Port States Measure Agreement (PSMA) since 2018 and Fiji's leadership in co-hosting the regional coordination meeting on PSMA meeting in May 2022 in Nadi, Fiji, underscores its dedication to promoting responsible fisheries practices and safeguarding the marine environment for future generations.

As Fiji's Minister for Fisheries, I would like to acknowledge the technical assistance and capacity building initiatives provided by the UNFAO in strengthening resilience of Fiji's fisheries sector, enabling us to better adapt to the challenges posed by climate change and overfishing. The UNFAO's continued support in promoting responsible fisheries practices, implementing effective fisheries management plans, and enhancing post-harvest processing techniques are instrumental in ensuring the long term sustainability of our marine resources.

Honorable Ministers, the One Health approach is integral to Fiji's efforts to address the interconnected challenges of human, animal and environmental health. By promoting collaboration between sectors and addressing emerging zoonotic diseases, Fiji aims to safeguard public health and food safety. Indeed, we acknowledge FAO's leading role in global One Health initiatives and are pleased to see the recent FAO support to Fiji through the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Disease (ECTAD) in supporting capacity development and technical interventions relevant to Fiji's priorities of the environment, agriculture and health sectors.

Fiji recognises the importance of the UNFAO's country network in supporting our national efforts to achieve food security and nutrition for all. The FAO sub-regional office for the Pacific Island Countries based in Samoa and the FAO Fiji Country offices play a crucial role in providing technical assistance, capacity building, and policy support, as well as strengthened collaboration with national governments to enhance our agricultural and food systems. Fiji supports the overarching principles of the proposed

approach to strengthening country offices, including strengthening capacities of national staff and taking into consideration the local context, and we look forward to further discussions on this.

Fiji recognizes the transformative power of technology and digitalization in revolutionising our agriculture sector. As a nation heavily reliant on agriculture and fisheries for food security and economic development, we understand the importance of harnessing innovation to enhance productivity, sustainability and resilience in our agri-food systems. Fiji is committed to embracing technological advancements and digital solutions to drive the agricultural sector forward. Through strategic partnerships, capacity building initiatives, and investment in research and development, we aim to empower our farmers and fisher folks with the tools and knowledge needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving global landscape. To this end, Fiji will be co-hosting with the UNFAO the “2024 Pacific SIDs Solution Forum” later in the year.

Finally, Honorable Ministers, Fiji would like to commend the excellent leadership of the UNFAO. Fiji’s collaboration with UNFAO plays a key role in achieving the SDGs through capacity building, knowledge sharing, and technical assistance. Over the next few days, my delegation will be discussing further Fiji’s priorities with the UNFAO and also stands ready to collaborate with Member States and global partners to achieve a sustainable and food secure future for all.

Vinaka vakalevu!

FRANCE

French and English versions



MINISTÈRE
DE L'EUROPE ET DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

37ème Conférence régionale de la FAO pour l'Asie et le Pacifique Point 14 : Hiérarchisation des besoins aux niveaux des pays et de la région *= Seul le prononcé fait foi =*

Déclaration de la France

Madame la Présidente/Monsieur le Président,

Je vous remercie et je félicite le Sri Lanka pour l'excellente organisation de cette Conférence régionale.

La France partage le constat alarmant de la détérioration de la sécurité alimentaire dans le monde, aggravée dramatiquement par l'invasion russe de l'Ukraine, y compris dans la zone Asie Pacifique. Dans son rapport 2023 sur l'état de la sécurité alimentaire et de la nutrition dans le monde, la FAO indique que dans un scénario sans guerre en Ukraine, il y aurait, en 2030, 23 millions de personnes de moins en sous-alimentation chronique. Ce chiffre interpelle, alors que le conflit entre désormais dans sa troisième année. Bien que d'autres facteurs d'instabilité tels que les récessions économiques, la crise de la COVID-19 ou le changement climatique pèsent et tendent à aggraver l'insécurité alimentaire internationale, les conflits en demeurent la première cause.

D'autres défis affectent la situation de l'agriculture et l'alimentation dans la région. Les ressources naturelles et la souveraineté de nombreux États, souvent les États insulaires les plus fragiles, sont menacées par la pêche illégale dans les zones économiques exclusives. Le changement climatique a également des conséquences majeures sur l'insécurité alimentaire dans la région.

Dans ce contexte, il est nécessaire et urgent d'agir sur tous les leviers pour œuvrer à la transformation des systèmes alimentaires vers plus de durabilité et de résilience, pour garantir la capacité de production alimentaire à long terme et assurer l'accès de tous et toutes, aujourd'hui et dans le futur, à une alimentation saine, diversifiée, équilibrée, en quantité suffisante, tout en préservant la biodiversité et les ressources naturelles. Une hiérarchisation est donc impossible.

Il est également important d'adopter une approche systémique en s'appuyant sur le développement des pratiques agroécologiques et tout autre approche innovante pour accompagner la transition vers des systèmes diversifiés, décarbonés, efficaces et plus sobres en intrants.

Le développement de telles démarches est également intéressant pour produire en réduisant les émissions de gaz à effet de serre, stocker le carbone et préserver les ressources naturelles.

La France souligne l'importance de développer une approche « Une seule santé », afin de répondre de manière globale aux enjeux de santé humaine, animale et environnementale. A cet égard, l'initiative de recherche PREZODE, lancée en octobre 2022 est un instrument essentiel pour approfondir les synergies entre les travaux de recherche et les actions opérationnelles de prévention des pandémies.

La France est engagée pour répondre à ces enjeux globaux, dans une démarche partenariale et concrète.

C'est le sens de notre mobilisation dans la Coalition alimentation scolaire, co-présidée par la France, le Brésil et la Finlande, et qui s'est réunie à Paris en octobre 2023, qui apporte une solution concrète pour transformer les systèmes alimentaires. Cet effort en faveur de l'alimentation scolaire permet de soutenir les approvisionnements d'origine locale et les petits producteurs. La France salue l'engagement de nombreux pays de la région Asie Pacifique dans cette Coalition et la tenue prochaine d'une réunion régionale sous les auspices du Cambodge et des Philippines.

D'autre part, dans le prolongement des Jeux Olympiques, la France organisera le Sommet Nutrition pour la Croissance début 2025 et invite tous les membres de la région à préparer des engagements politiques et financiers ambitieux en vue de ce sommet, car les questions de sécurité alimentaire et de nutrition sont interdépendantes. Améliorer la nutrition permet de rendre plus résilientes les populations et de prévenir des impacts irréversibles sur la santé en particulier des mères et des enfants.

Par ailleurs, la France est particulièrement mobilisée pour la protection de l'océan. Nous organiserons, conjointement avec le Costa Rica, la Troisième Conférence des Nations unies sur l'océan (UNOC3), qui se tiendra à Nice en juin 2025 et sera précédée d'un événement de haut niveau au Costa Rica en juin 2024. Ce sera l'occasion de faire avancer ensemble un agenda international ambitieux pour les océans, notamment en matière de pêche durable et de lutte contre la pêche illégale, non déclarée et non réglementée (INN). Il nécessitera le soutien de la FAO et de ses États Membres, tout particulièrement en Asie-Pacifique qui est une grande région de pêche.

Des instruments normatifs majeurs contre la pêche INN ont été adoptés sous les auspices de la FAO. Il importe d'universaliser et renforcer la mise en œuvre de l'Accord relatif aux mesures du ressort de l'État du port, dit PSMA (*Port State Measures Agreement*) et de trouver des voies pour revitaliser l'Accord de conformité, concernant l'État du pavillon, comme l'a souligné le Comité des pêches de la FAO à sa 35^{ème} session.

Mme la Présidente/M. le Président,

parce que la vulnérabilité climatique est une réalité contemporaine, la France investit dans des moyens de recherche et des moyens d'action. C'est au cœur de notre stratégie Indopacifique. Le Président de la République a ainsi lancé en juillet 2023 un grand programme d'investissement pour préserver la forêt en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, en coopération avec la FAO.

La question du financement est clé. Nul ne doit avoir à choisir entre la lutte contre la pauvreté et la lutte contre le changement climatique. La France est très mobilisée à cet égard, comme en témoignent notre engagement politique et financier en faveur de la 13^{ème} reconstitution des ressources du FIDA, et le nouvel agenda que nous avons porté en faveur d'investissements solidaires, le Pacte de Paris pour les peuples et la planète, auquel ont souscrit de nombreux pays de la région.

Enfin, nous ne pourrions atteindre ces objectifs que si les fondations de notre maison commune, la FAO, sont solides. La France est attachée à la bonne gouvernance des Organisations internationales et à ce titre, sera attentive au suivi et à la mise en œuvre des recommandations du rapport que le Corps commun d'inspection des Nations Unies vient de consacrer à la FAO.

Je vous remercie./.

COURTESY TRANSLATION

37 th Session FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific Item 14. Prioritization of country and regional needs

Statement of France

Ms/M. Chairperson

I thank you for giving me the floor and would like to congratulate Sri Lanka for the excellent organization of this Regional Conference.

France shares the alarming assessment of a deteriorating global food security situation, including in the Asia-Pacific region, that has been sharply aggravated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In its 2023 report on the state of food security and nutrition in the world, FAO indicates that in a scenario without war in Ukraine, there would be, in 2030, 23 million fewer people chronically undernourished. The figure is striking, as this illegal war is about to enter its third year. Although other factors of instability - such as economic recessions, the COVID-19 crisis or climate change – also tend to aggravate international food insecurity, conflicts do remain the primary cause of food insecurity.

Other challenges affect the state of food and agriculture in the region. The natural resources and sovereignty of many states are threatened by illegal fishing in exclusive economic zones, notably for small island states. Climate change is also having a major impact on food insecurity in the region.

In this context, it is both necessary and urgent to act on all levels to transform food systems towards greater sustainability and resilience, in order to guarantee long-term food production and ensure access for all, today and in the future, to a healthy, sufficient, diversified and balanced diet, while preserving biodiversity and natural resources. These objectives are interrelated and must therefore be simultaneously pursued.

This must be done in a systemic manner, based on the development of agroecological practices and other innovative approaches aimed at transitioning towards diversified, low-emission and efficient systems, with fewer inputs.

The development of such approaches is also key to sustaining production while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, storing carbon and preserving natural resources.

France also underlines the importance of developing a “One Health” approach, addressing human, animal and environmental health challenges altogether. In this regard, the PREZODE research initiative, launched in October 2022, is an essential instrument for deepening synergies between research work and operational actions for pandemic prevention.

France is committed to responding to all these global challenges, through concrete partnerships.

One such partnership is the School Meal Coalition, co-chaired by France, Brazil and Finland, which held its first global meeting in Paris in October 2023. Among many benefits, the coalition provides concrete tools to transform food systems, by supporting local procurement from small producers. France welcomes the commitment taken by many Asian Pacific countries in the context of the Coalition, as well as the upcoming regional meeting to be held under the auspices of Cambodia and the Philippines.

Subsequently, in the wake of the Paris 2024 Olympics, France will host the next Nutrition for Growth Summit in early 2025. We invite all members of the region to consider taking ambitious political and financial commitments for this summit, taking into account that food security and nutrition are interdependent. Improving nutrition makes populations more resilient and prevents irreversible health impacts, for mothers and children in particular.

On another note, France would like to reiterate its commitment to preserving the ocean. Together with Costa Rica, France will host the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, in June 2025 – to be preceded by a high-level event in Costa Rica in June 2024. This Conference will provide

an opportunity to promote an ambitious international ocean agenda, including through advancing sustainable fishing and combatting illegal, undeclared and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Such ambition will only be possible through the active involvement of FAO and its Member Nations, particularly in a major fishing region such as Asia-Pacific.

Major normative instruments against IUU fishing have been adopted under the auspices of FAO. Among them is the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), which we consider important to universalize, while reinforcing its implementation. Another one is Compliance agreement, applicable to flag States, which the 35th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries suggested revitalizing through several institutional options.

Ms/M. Chairperson,

because climate vulnerability is a pressing issue, France is investing both in research capacities and means of action. This is at the heart of our Indo-Pacific strategy – as illustrated *inter alia* by the major investment program announced by President Macron in July 2023, to preserve the forest in Papua New Guinea, in cooperation with FAO.

The issue of financing is key. No one should have to choose between the fight against poverty and the fight against climate change. France is very mobilized in this regard, as evidenced by our political and financial support to the 13th replenishment of IFAD resources, and the new agenda for solidarity investments enshrined in the Paris Pact for the People and the planet –which many Asia-Pacific countries have endorsed.

Finally, we will only be able to achieve these objectives if the foundations of FAO – our common home – are solid. In other terms, this means keeping FAO in line with the highest standards of good governance for international organizations. This is why France will pay close attention to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report on the Management and Administration of FAO, recently published by Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations.

Thank you./.

INDIA

Recorded National Statement by Hon'ble Agriculture Minister for 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific "Prioritization of Country and Regional needs"

His Excellency Honorable Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries of Sri Lanka, the Chair of 37th APCR Ministerial session, His Excellency Mr. Qu Dongyu, DG FAO, Honourable Ministers of other participating countries, Chair, FAO Council, Heads of delegations, ladies and gentlemen.

Namaskar,

At the outset, India congratulates Sri Lanka for hosting 37th APCR which is an important regional forum for deliberating regional priorities and policy responses for addressing multiple challenges to agriculture and achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

India accords highest priority to development of agriculture, food security and nutrition for all. Our efforts and accomplishments under the leadership of our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in recent years are a testimony to this.

We have achieved record production in food grains, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products, which has enabled India in contributing its share to global food security while providing humanitarian food assistance to several countries.

We are implementing three of the world's largest food-based safety net programs, to ensure food security and nutrition. Since pandemic, India has been distributing free food grains and pulses, to more than 810 million citizens, in addition to other measures.

Cutting-edge technologies and innovations like drones, AI, digital agriculture and Agristack are revolutionizing India's agriculture.

We are implementing focussed interventions such as direct cash transfers to farmers, enhancing access to institutional credit which stand at 245 billion USD till date and operating largest crop insurance scheme under which more than 12 billion USD has been disbursed to the insured farmers till date.

We are promoting crop diversification by including climate smart and climate-resilient crops with focus on millets and other ancient grains through MAHARISHI initiative.

We prioritize the well-being of small and marginal farmers, women, and tribal communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Excellencies,

India encourages FAO to give due weightage to best practices and initiatives especially the social security nets by national governments and incorporate them in its methodologies for computation and analysis of the state of food security and nutrition. FAO headquarters and local FAO representations should constructively and continuously engage with national governments in this regard.

We urge FAO to prioritize small and marginal farmers, women, and tribal communities, working on climate-smart agriculture technologies and farming system models to ensure inclusive development.

We emphasize the need to strengthen FAO and country offices with regard to responsibilities and powers, to enhance their capacities in supporting member states.

We call for a thorough performance evaluation of FAO country and regional offices to ensure alignment with envisioned priorities and targets.

Lastly, India would like to reiterate that achieving the SDGs hinges upon the success of this region. As a Specialised Agency and custodian of 21 SDG indicators, we look up to FAO for cogent solutions and handholding of member countries in support of agrifood systems transformation and delivering the SDG targets.

Excellencies,

India stands ready to collaborate, learn, and contribute to the collective efforts required to address the pressing challenges facing the global food systems.

Thank you. Jai Hind

INDONESIA

Ministerial Plenary Session
The 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
(Colombo, 20 February 2024 at 14.00 – 16.30)
Statement by Dr. Prihasto Setyanto,
Secretary General, ad interim, Ministry of Agriculture,
the Republic of Indonesia
Agenda Item 14: *Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs*

Excellencies:

Mr. Chairperson,

Ministers of Agriculture,

Heads of Delegates,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have an honour to speak on behalf of the Government of Indonesia at the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

At the outset, we extend our appreciation to the FAO Secretariat and heartfelt congratulations to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting this important meeting.

Mr. Chair,

Last year, the UN Report found that none of the SDGs were on track to be achieved by 2030, including goals related to hunger.

We need ambitious global and national commitments and extraordinary efforts to back on track and accelerate our achievement of the SDGs.

Indonesia is committed to building more resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems; and focuses its priorities on protecting the most vulnerable, especially smallholders, family farmers and fishers.

Mr. Chair,

To ensure food availability and access for approximately 278 million Indonesians, Indonesia has made serious efforts to increase food production by increasing the productivity and efficiency of agricultural businesses, empowering farmers, and sustaining agri-food systems. Some strategic agricultural programs implemented include:

- To increase national food production efficiently, Indonesia implements a national Food Estate program, promotes agriculture modernization, and strengthens farmers' regeneration.
- To address the pressure on arable land availability, Indonesia has optimised wetlands for agricultural use using modern technologies.
- To promote local food-based diversification and healthy diets, Indonesia consistently promotes the Sustainable Food Home Yard program.
- To increase farmers' access to finance, Indonesia provides subsidized credit (KUR) for small-scale and medium-farm enterprises.
- To ensure sustainable growth in the agriculture sector, Indonesia promotes and facilitates the investment of SMEs.

We are pleased that our efforts have successfully maintained our food availability and increased people's access to nutritious, safe, adequate, and healthy foods.

This achievement was confirmed by low food inflation rate, and reduction of prevalence of undernourishment and the prevalence of stunting in children under five years.

Mr. Chair,

Indonesia appreciates FAO for its long-standing support of our national agriculture and food systems development.

To conclude, as part of our commitment to promote food, energy, and water nexus for sustainable development, Indonesia invites you all to join and participate in the 10th World Water Forum in Bali, with the theme “Water for Shared Prosperity.”

I wish you every success in your deliberations at this Conference.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN (THE)

**The Speech of H. E. Mr. Mohajer,
Honorable Deputy Minister for Agronomy Affairs,
Ministry of Agriculture Jihad**

At

**The 37th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Countries of the Asian and
Pacific Region - FAO**

February 19-22, 2024

Colombo - Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

Firstly, on behalf of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the honorable Minister of Agriculture Jihad, H.E. Mr. Nikbakht, I would like to express my gratitude to the government of Sri Lanka for hosting and holding the 37th virtual meeting of senior experts of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the ministerial meeting. I am honored to be among the participants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the Asia-Pacific region faces multiple challenges such as climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and other conditions. These challenges have made it difficult for countries in the region to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, particularly "**zero hunger**". According to a report presented at the senior experts' meeting, 23.5% of the population in this region is experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, and in 2021, around 1.9 billion people in the region could not provide a healthy diet.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has tried to take advantage of the revision of the "**agricultural statistics and information system**", strengthening "**agricultural meteorology**", "**increasing the penetration coefficient of knowledge and technology**", "**empowering rural and nomadic communities**", "**designing a new financing system for the agriculture and food sector**" to reduce the impact of exogenous impulses such as climate change and drought on the agenda of its actions.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Islamic Republic of Iran has outlined a national road map for transformation in agriculture and food systems over the next ten years. To achieve this, the country has put the following priorities in its policies and actions: updating the data and information system of agriculture and food, reducing the yield gap, improving the knowledge and technology penetration coefficient in production units, improving fair trade flow, improving national standards, integrated management of pests, maintaining and improving soil health, and integrated management of water resources.

In order to reduce wastes of agricultural and food products, there is no other way than to improve the penetration rate of knowledge and technology, increase awareness and attract the participation of people and the private sector. The use of the 4R Approach in the management of loss and waste, including "Refuse, Reducing, Reusing and Recycling" is suggested. Now is the time to strengthen the "implementation of international and regional joint commitments" by "NGOs and the private sector" and "paying special attention to the rural and nomadic community."

With access to open and international seas in the south and the world's largest lake in the north, the Islamic Republic of Iran has put "sea-oriented development" on its agenda. Also Preservation of aquatic resources, aquaculture and completion of aquatic value chains, promotion of per capita consumption of aquatic as a nutritious and healthy food are considered.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Islamic Republic of Iran is willing to participate in scientific, research, and consulting events, and share its experiences and findings in all fields on the basis of mutual respect and common commitment for a better future.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate and participate in scientific, research, consulting events and share its experiences and findings in all fields based on the principle of mutual respect and common commitment for a better future.

Considering the future threats facing the food systems, it is necessary to pay special attention to the intersection of economic stability, social stability and environmental stability in planning. Therefore, from the point of view of the need to pay attention to the principles of sustainable development, the revitalizing agricultural approach is on the agenda in Iran's agriculture sector. Creating equal opportunities, empowering and promoting the participation of youth and women is one of the main axes in the programs; because those are young people who will live and work in the coming future.

Emphasis on encouraging and facilitating "sustainable agricultural, rural and food tourism" and scenic (nature) tourism is one of the other upcoming programs.

Honored Participants,

Now is the time to try to attract financial and investment resources based on common understanding and in the framework of cooperation in order to promote new technologies and facilitate access to them and increase the use of new observation, monitoring and early warning methods. Special attention to adopt the approaches of "Revival Agriculture Development", "Climate Smart Agriculture", "Conservative Agriculture" and special attention to "One Health", "Water Economy" and "Circular Economy" are at the top of the current programs. The Islamic Republic of Iran always supports efforts to improve food security at the regional level, especially in the countries of Asia and the Pacific region.

I would like to express my gratitude for hosting this meeting. I also thank the President, dignitaries, and the audience for their tireless efforts to improve the food security of the people of Asia and the Pacific region.

Alireza Mohajer

Deputy for Agronomy Affairs,

Ministry of Agriculture Jihad

Representative of the Minister of Agriculture Jihad, IRI

JAPAN

**Statement by SUZUKI Norikazu
State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan
37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
20 February 2024**

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chair,

FAO Director-General Dr. Qu Dongyu,
distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, it is my honor to have the opportunity to address the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

I would like to sincerely thank the FAO Secretariat and the Government of Sri Lanka, as the host country, for their efforts in organizing this Regional Conference.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my gratitude for the messages of sympathy that Japan has received from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, regarding the massive earthquake occurred on the New Year's Day. It severely hit the Noto region, and many people lost their lives and homes. It also damaged a Global Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) site. We are now making full-scale efforts to restoration and rehabilitation and thank all of you for your encouragement.

In recent years, we have been witnessing a number of problems threatening food security in the Asia-Pacific region.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has exacerbated the global food crisis, especially that of vulnerable people.

In addition, addressing climate change and the loss of biodiversity is also our top priority. With this in mind, we must accelerate the transformation of food systems to resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems faster than ever before.

Recognizing this, for the first time in 25 years, Japan plans to amend "The Basic Law on Food and Agriculture and Rural Areas," which governs our agricultural policies. This act would emphasize the strengthening of food security and environmental harmonization.

Through this law, it is our goal to ensure adequate food for everyone at all times, whether in time of peace or emergency. We are also trying to ensure the stable food supply by increasing domestic production and ensuring stable food imports.

At the same time, we are paving the way for sustainable food and agriculture sectors based on the "Strategy for Sustainable Food Systems," called MIDORI", to achieve both productive growth and sustainability, through innovation.

In its endeavor, Japan believes that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The climate conditions, geographical features and agricultural structures of the respective countries concerned must be considered, and used for the benefit of each country.

From this point of view, Japan is now trying to disseminate our initiative to the Asia-Monsoon region, where the climate and agricultural conditions are similar to those in Japan. We launched the "ASEAN-Japan MIDORI Cooperation Plan" with ASEAN countries to achieve both agricultural productivity growth and sustainable development.

As an example of the activity under the plan, Japanese scalable agricultural technologies have been compiled and published, under the project "Green Asia", as the technology catalog.

Japan believes that some of the technologies can also be useful outside ASEAN countries. We are ready to share our knowledge to promote resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Last but not least, I would like to address another important matter of grave concern to our food supply industry.

Import restrictions on Japanese food product, introduced after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the discharge of Advanced Liquid Processing System treated water, are still being maintained by some countries and regions, without having any scientific evidence. Japan would like to express that Japan does not accept these measures at all.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our will to continue working with FAO and all stakeholders, and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (THE)

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am speaking on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR.

Laos is firmly committed to transforming our food systems for a more sustainable and prosperous future. Lao PDR recognizes the critical role that robust food systems play in ensuring food security, nutrition, and environmental well-being for all Lao citizens.

Our national priorities for food systems transformation focus on four key areas:

- **Establishing a comprehensive policy framework:** This framework will guide national and provincial efforts towards improving food security, nutrition, and sustainability. It will be inclusive, equitable, and prioritize the needs of small-scale farmers, women, youth, and marginalized communities. Additionally, it will promote environmentally sound practices and reduce food waste and loss.
- **Enhancing agricultural productivity:** Lao PDR aim to increase agricultural productivity through improved access to seeds, fertilizers, irrigation systems, and modern farming practices. This will enable farmers to boost food production and generate higher incomes.
- **Developing strong market linkages:** Strengthening market linkages is crucial to ensure that farmers can sell their produce at fair prices. Lao PDR will achieve this by improving infrastructure, transportation links, and value chains, while also actively involving smallholder farmers in market systems.
- **Promoting sustainable production practices:** Lao PDR are committed to encouraging sustainable production methods such as organic farming, conservation agriculture, and integrated pest management. This will help us protect our environment and ensure the long-term viability of our agricultural sector.

However, our journey towards robust food systems transformation is not without challenges. Lao PDR faces several issues that impact our progress, including:

- **Limited capacity:** Smallholder farmers, producer organizations, and rural producers often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to adopt new technologies and implement sustainable practices.
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** Deficient logistics and value chain infrastructure, coupled with a lack of traceability procedures for agricultural products, hinder value addition, food safety, and market access for our farmers.
- **Limited access to knowledge and innovation:** Lao PDR need to bridge the gap between research and practice by facilitating the adoption of modern technologies, promoting innovation in crop production, and supporting initiatives like "agriculture entrepreneurs for Green Rural Enterprises and Economy."

To overcome these challenges and achieve our food systems transformation goals, Lao PDR seek your support in the following areas:

- **Capacity building:** Lao PDR requires support in enhancing the capacity of our stakeholders, including farmers, producer organizations, and rural producers. This includes strengthening extension services, promoting sustainable agriculture practices, and building resilience to economic shocks.

- **Infrastructure development:** Upgrading our logistics and value chain infrastructure, establishing robust traceability systems, and providing access to agricultural financing are crucial for enhancing value addition, food safety, and market access.
- **Knowledge transfer and innovation:** Lao PDR need your collaboration to facilitate the adoption of modern technologies in agriculture, promote innovation in crop production, and support initiatives that foster agricultural entrepreneurship and increase productivity.

Distinguished guests, the Government of Lao PDR is unwavering in its commitment to building a sustainable and resilient food system for all. We believe that through collaborative efforts, capacity building, infrastructure development, and knowledge transfer, Lao PDR can achieve our goals and ensure a brighter future for the Lao people.

Thank you.

MALAYSIA



APRC37 PLENARY SESSION: COUNTRY STATEMENT

Item 14

Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs

**Thank you, Your Excellency Chairperson, Your
Excellency Director-General of FAO, Mr. Independent
Chairperson of the Council, Honourable Ministers,**

Excellencies and Delegates,

I am deeply honoured to speak here at the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, representing the Government of Malaysia.

First and foremost, Malaysia extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the FAO Regional Secretariat for their exceptional organisation of this significant conference. We also commend Bangladesh for its leadership in hosting the 36th FAO APRC in 2022 and for its efforts in advancing food security.

Your Excellency Chairperson,

I am pleased to inform you that in 2022, Malaysia's agro food industry has contributed 11.9 per cent to the Malaysian GDP, amounting to RM47.5 billion (USD 9.95 billion). It marks a 3.6 per cent increase from the previous year, showcasing the resilience of this industry amid the many global challenges at the time. I believe, this is a testament of success, of the National Agrofood Policy 2.0, which has spearheaded a sustainable, resilient, and technology-driven agrofood sector in Malaysia and contributed to the economic growth of the country.

As an extension of the NAP 2.0, recently I have outlined several strategies actions for implementation in priority areas in the agrofood industry in Malaysia, such as intensification of focus in aquaculture, cattle farming, grain maize, youth engagement, and the empowerment of agricultural training institutes. For year 2024, I have included strategic actions for four new areas which are on paddy and rice, poultry and eggs, shallots and pineapple farming in ensuring sustained progress to address food security challenges and to further bolster economic growth in the agriculture sector.

The strategic actions in these priority areas focus on fostering innovation and re-engineering across the entire value chain, to ensure a significant increase in productivity. In addition, they are also aimed at promoting a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural sector that contributes to national and regional development goals while safeguarding the environment and ensuring food security for future generations.

The future success of Malaysia's policy on the agrofood sector is also contingent upon regional

cooperation and smart partnership between policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, scientists, industry leaders and innovators to create a sustainable ecosystem to foster a comprehensive transformation of the agrofood system. Therefore, Malaysia calls upon FAO, and members of APRC to continue working together in seeking new opportunities for collaboration and effectively respond to the challenges in the agrofood sector in the region.

Thank you.

MALDIVES



37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
Dr. Aishath Rameela
Minister of Agriculture and Animal Welfare
Maldives, Country Statement

Director General of FAO, Excellency Dr Qu Dongyu,

Excellencies,

Honorable Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalaam Alaikum.

It gives me immense pleasure and honor to join the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference of the Asia and the Pacific in this beautiful city of Colombo, Sri Lanka. First of all, please allow me to commend FAO and the Government of Sri Lanka for the excellent arrangement of the conference and the kind hospitality rendered to me and my delegation.

Honorable Chair,

It is commendable that the current Government of Maldives, under the leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu has prioritised food and nutrition security. The creation of a dedicated Ministry for Agriculture clearly indicates of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, vision to develop the agriculture sector as a vital economic pillar of the country. The government of Maldives is committed to allocating significant resources towards the expansion of agricultural farmlands and improving sustainable food production through adaptive technologies to ensure food security in the country.

In the recent years, Agriculture and the Fisheries sector has felt the impact of climate change. Rough weather, high intensity monsoon rainfall, drought, high temperature; to name a few; have been detrimental for fishing and farming. Building resilience to climate change impacts is important by way of climate proofing of agri food systems and establishment of insurance mechanisms to farmers and fishermen. Moreover, the impacts of climate change on highly migratory tuna and its related species are of significant concern for the Maldives. Collective efforts need to be concentrated to mitigate these impacts, particularly Small Island Developing States that are highly dependent on the ocean resources.

Maldives is a coral atoll nation with 1% dry land, and to account for the small and limited land availability, one of the key focused areas for local production would be investing in highly efficient greenhouse based vertical hydroponics systems operated using renewable energy. For the very first time in Maldives, we are piloting climate smart vertical growing systems and we have an ambitious plan of expanding this to our farmers based on the results of the pilot project. We need regional collaboration and support for these types of agrifood system transformation initiative.

Our high dependency on imported food makes our country very much vulnerable to natural disasters, conflicts and wars. We urge all countries to maintain regional stability as it is important for the livelihood and well-being of people. It is also equally important to monitor the country's food export

and add measures to ensure its safety by improving the regulation of food production and marketing systems.

Honorable Chair,

Maldives also supports the one health approach to address risks to human, animal and plant health which is indeed crucial to accelerate agrifood systems transformation in the region. In order to address both the emergence of pests and diseases as well as transboundary introductions and reduce the spread of plant and zoonotic diseases, we need support in developing an effective bio security system.

Maldives is investing significantly in mariculture initiatives and we are concerned with the poor regulation of antibiotics and medications in fish feeds. Similar scenario is foreseen for the poultry industry as well. Hence it is necessary that regional collaborations are established to regulate the feed and medication value chains.

A comprehensive mechanism for the treatment and wellbeing of animals has never been a priority of any government. His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu for the first time in Maldives history, has Instituted a Ministry dedicated to Animal Welfare. As this is something very new, we need regional collaborations in the development of animal shelters, veterinary clinics and diagnostic laboratories.

Honorable Chair,

Mariculture is in its infancy in the Maldives, and we are working with international partners to find avenues to fast track its development. Our goal is to find the best environments and species suitable for mariculture in the Maldives, which has tremendous potential and opportunities. Diversifying our economy is one of the main policies of the government, and we believe that mariculture is a promising way to achieve it. We would like to invite our partners to join hands with us in this endeavor.

Honorable Chair,

While Maldives appreciates, the FAO TCP Projects and its impact, it could only be a mere drop in the ocean in terms of its impact on improving food security, disaster risk mitigation and livelihoods. Maldives deserve more coherent programs under the umbrella of FAO technical strength. We are also very obliged for having a FAO program Officer stationed in Maldives, but the presence of a country office is imperative to implement programs successfully with measurable impacts benefiting the country and its people, including hundreds of thousands of expatriates.

I am confident that the deliberations we have made during the course of this conference will create a pathway to build a sustainable regenerative food system in the region, leading to a better future for us all.

Thank you!

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Remarks from H.E. Anthony M. Muller
Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce
at the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)
20th February 2024
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Excellencies,

Esteemed Guests and Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to convey to each and every one of you a warm greetings of “Iakwe” on behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Our gathering here today signifies our appreciation for regional cooperation and solidarity. I would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to our gracious host, the people and the Government of Sri-Lanka. My small contingent was fortunate enough to be welcomed into this great nation by the Honorable D.B. Herath, State Minister of Livestock and his lovely daughter, Dinithi Methsharani Herath.

I'd also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the FAO for extending this very kind invitation to us, to be a part of such an important event. I'm here today, to share our story, especially the challenges we face today. Like our neighboring countries, we too have our unique land tenure system, the government owns no land; our Republic is 42,000 people scattered over 2.1 million square kilometers of territorial waters; and like the Maldives, Kiribati, and Tuvalu, our nation is one of the lowest lying coral reefs in the world, meaning we will be one of the very first to go due to the effects of climate change; because of our geological makeup, we are one of the harshest agriculture environment in the region, meaning only a few plant species can survive; our domestic production is 10% to 20% of fresh produce; our remoteness is one of our greatest challenges to accessing affordable healthy eating.

It's not all bad news Mr. Chairman, our Republic does have some assets at our disposal; we are a member to the PNA, Parties to the Nauru Agreement, the world's largest sustainable tuna fisheries; one-third of PNA catch comes through our Capital, Majuro, making us the world's largest transshipment port; talk about by-catch, animal feed, organic fertilizer, food; we have over a hundred local farmers on Majuro alone, this is a small number, but per capita, it's a reasonable number; we've engaged students from New York University (NYU) as interns to help us quantify potential subsidies to farmers, incentivize farming; we heavily subsidize our copra industry for a healthy outer island economy, why not subsidize farmers for a healthy Republic; we have a good team in the Ministry, supported by a good team in FAO; Mr. Chairman, I just executed an MoA for the Small Islands Food and Water Project (SIFWAP), a project funded by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) through the International Funds for Agriculture Development (IFAD), supplemented by additional financial assistance from the Government of New Zealand; I believe it boils down to productive dialogue, coordination and yes cooperation; this forum today is a testament of this, it's a great opportunity for synergy.

For some of you gathered here today, you're already there, in terms of food security; for the rest of us, we have an inkling of where we need to be, we just need some guidance in how we get there. With this, thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

NAURU



REPUBLIC OF NAURU

HON JESSE JEREMIAH, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT & AGRICULTURE

37TH SESSION OF THE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC CONFERENCE (APRC)

Plenary Session-Prioritization of country and regional needs- Country statements:

Your Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

As a small island nation with roughly 4sq.km of arable land, Nauru faces unique challenges in achieving food system transformation. We depend almost entirely on expensive imported foods, creating a food system extremely vulnerable to external shocks- most recently Covid-19 and that of the 5F economic crisis.

Food shipments to Nauru were interrupted early in the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to very concerning shortages. As a response, with support from partners, the government has scaled up domestic efforts to improve food security by promoting Kitchen gardening. A “staple food farm” was also established to grow native crop varieties, build the capacity of local smallholder farmers and support further research in the use of climate-smart technologies to increase adaptation and resilience.

While these initiatives have revitalized small-scale agriculture as a livelihood strategy and have had a modest effect on improving availability and access to nutritious foods; we are far from reducing our dependence on food imports and averting the next crisis.

To add on, as our population continues to grow, so does the competition for land and the need to produce more food. It is with this realization, our government has taken the lead to launch the “Higher Ground Initiative” with the goal to sustainably manage land and increase food production while delivering positive agroecological outcomes and long-term resilience.

While Nauru values the efforts received from the FAO mostly in the form of technical assistance, more can be done. Systemic transformations start at the country level and our pathway represents measures to shape the future we want. The future we want to see for Nauru is one of food sovereignty- as envisaged by the goals of the “Higher Ground Initiative” that is tailored to our national circumstances, vulnerabilities, and culture.

It is a massive undertaking and the plans are to rehabilitate and develop land previously mined for phosphate to use for sustainable agriculture integrated with agroecological practices to boost food production. Coupled with this, the government has signed a funding agreement with the Adaptation fund to improve the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains by adopting climate-resilient practices. Nauru is also committed to joining the food systems IP under GEF to catalyze the transformation to sustainable food systems that are nature positive, resilient, and pollution reduced.

To support this, we call for development models that are sustainable, inclusive, and equitable, and we encourage investments from the FAO along with development partners to lend their expertise, and the technological innovation required to advance the 2030 agenda that is linked to our national priorities. In simple layman terms, I would like to know what are the most viable climate resilient technologies that suit our national circumstances that can bolster food production in Nauru.

In closing, it is imperative that we address the financing gap in the food system and strengthen the voice of those less influential in the global food landscape. This underlines the commitment to a just transformation.

NEPAL

Statement by Honorable Doctor Bedu Ram Bhusal

Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development & Leader of Nepali Delegation to 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Respected Chairperson of this Conference,

Excellencies,

Director General of FAO,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to make a brief statement on agriculture sector, priorities and emerging issues of Nepal in this conference.

Agriculture is a fundamental element of human existence but it is once again facing new kind of multidimensional uncertainties and challenges. In this context there is need of strong collaborative efforts among countries beyond political boundaries.

In the context of Nepal, Agriculture sector is leading contributor of the economy. It contributes 24.7% of GDP engaging 57.3% of population and getting feminized in recent years. This sector carries wider potential to ensure food security, poverty reduction and drive economic prosperity, recognizing this fact government of Nepal has prioritized agriculture sector and is committed to unleashing its full potentialities. Government has endorsed 20 year agriculture development strategy in 2015 to drive this sector, and started joint initiative involving public, private, cooperative sectors and development partners. After political restructuring agriculture service functions are more decentralized through giving more authority and resources to local levels and provincial governments. New governance system connectivity, technological advancement and markets has created new opportunities for agriculture transformation. Horticulture, livestock and fisheries sector growth is heading to fulfill domestic demand however cereal sector needs more efforts and attention to fulfill domestic demand.

The agriculture is largely rain-fed and around seventy percent of crop production is determined by climatic variability. In recent years Nepal is facing intense negative impact of climate change increasing loss and damage of agriculture produces. Low competitiveness exposed with climate change impact has increased vulnerability of agriculture enterprises, youth attraction toward farming is becoming intense challenge.

Government of Nepal is adopting number of policies and implementing programs toward climate smart agriculture to safeguard domestic food security. Further enhancing Capacity for Sustainable Management of Forests, Land and Biodiversity and Climate Resilient Agriculture and Green Mountain Economy would greatly contribute to the efforts of the Government.

Now I am focusing on the role of mountain agriculture which is home to unique innovations, farming systems, knowledge and agrobiodiversity to ensure food and livelihood security of the population. This unique agro ecosystem is severely impacted by climate change and it is high time to focus on promotion, conservation and transformation mountain agriculture for sustainable development. In this regard, Government of Nepal plans to develop a Center of Excellence institution for knowledge co-creation, research and dissemination on agri-food system related technologies and practices by strengthening public agricultural farms and stations located in the hills and high hills of Nepal. Government of Nepal would highly appreciate the support from FAO to promote such institutional development as learning centers.

The multidimensional problems of rural poverty, food insecurity, climate change and uncertainties extended beyond all man made boundaries cannot be solved through traditional approaches,

institutions, networks, platforms, cooperation and level engagement. We need new level of support, mechanisms, institutions, linkages, market processes and engagement among member countries to address these landed and foreseen multidimensional challenges. In this context Government of Nepal recognizes the high significance of initiatives to like Hand-in-Hand Initiatives (HiHi) to address the gamut of challenges and harness opportunities. The government of Nepal is committed to strategic investments in rural livelihoods, improved irrigation services, access to high-quality seeds, farm equipment, and training in advanced farming techniques to address these challenges.

Government of Nepal highly appreciate One Country One Priority Product (OCOP), Digital Village Initiative (DVI), Green City Initiative, One Health Approach and is actively engaging since their inception. In line with the Hand-in-Hand initiative, highlight recent declaration of Rt Hon. Prime Minister on the “Decade of Agricultural Investment”. The Government of Nepal (GON) identified the highland potato, ginger, cardamom, and Sichuan pepper as a Hand-in-Hand commodities as they were presented in 2021 Investment Forum in Rome. With the support of FAO, One Health Strategy has already been formulated and is under implementation in Nepal focusing on Food Safety, Antimicrobial Resistant (AMR), and Animal Health.

I also take this opportunity to recall the recent visit of Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), QU Dongyu in Nepal and his emphasis on the importance of agri-food systems transformation for Nepal which would be even more important after Nepal’s graduation from the Least Developed Countries category.

In conclusion, Nepal is embarking on this decade of agricultural investment, we are optimistic about achieving sustainable growth, increasing productivity, and contributing significantly to regional food security. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration with FAO and member countries in realizing that the transformation of the agri-food system hinges on prioritizing smallholders’ family farms and Micro, Small, and medium-sized Enterprises.

Thank you.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Country Statement for the 37 FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Director-General, distinguished delegates, friends and colleagues.

It is my pleasure to present this country statement, on behalf of New Zealand.

Thank you to our gracious host Sri Lanka for their efforts in hosting and delivering a productive and successful Asia-Pacific Regional Conference. Please accept my sincere apologies for not being able to join you in person.

This Conference is our opportunity to discuss and provide input to the FAO on our regional perspectives and contexts. This will help the FAO to target its work programmes and maximise its impact in our region.

Representation of our South West Pacific regional group in the ongoing discussions in Rome is challenging, so this meeting is very important.

In this vein, please allow me to emphasise the critical importance of regional cooperation. Working together lets us share knowledge, pool resources, and develop innovative solutions to enhance productivity while minimising environmental impacts.

In an increasingly interconnected world, collaboration among nations is not just beneficial but imperative for driving economic growth and addressing the myriad challenges we face.

Our region is heavily impacted by a range of issues, such as the effects of climate change, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, animal health, nutrition and food systems.

I would like to thank the FAO team for seeking our input on all of these issues this week, as they are all a high priority to many countries including New Zealand.

In particular, we are pleased with the inclusion of issues that have specific relevance and interest for the small island states of the Pacific.

The FAO has a very important role to play in assisting the small island developing states of the Pacific to deal with the increasing challenges around climate change, sustainable resource management, small scale agriculture, food security and nutrition.

New Zealand appreciates the significant role that FAO plays in providing global and regional analysis on the state of food and agriculture to ensure evidence-based decision-making by global players, at both a regional and national level.

We believe that robust and relevant data is key to informing sound decision-making and we are pleased to see the draft report of this Conference recognising the paucity of data available to the Pacific region.

New Zealand supports the ongoing work of the FAO in providing technical expertise and in supporting the timely development of global standards through the Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

These standard setting bodies support evidence- and rules-based regional and global trade, which are important in supporting resilience and the improvement of regional and global food security.

As a trading country, New Zealand depends on multilateral cooperation; and we depend on a well-functioning, rules-based system to guide our global engagement.

The global rules-based trading system is an essential part of the puzzle in our fight against hunger and malnutrition. Well-functioning trade is an essential part of the solution.

For New Zealand, science and research on innovative ways to increase food production in a sustainable way are key to addressing the global challenge of food security and climate change.

Science and innovation are central to improvements in food and agriculture in the region and in informing future decisions.

We live in a time where we are witnessing international conflicts disrupt global and regional economic recovery and which have pushed the FAO's Global food price index to the highest level in its history.

Increasing food insecurity is a tragic consequence of war and conflict and we must work collectively towards a world without conflict.

The work we do as Ministers of food and agriculture is important, and increasingly urgent. We need to ensure that we have the right measures in place to help strengthen our economies and make us more resilient to future climate, supply chain and disease shocks.

We also need urgently to reduce reliance on environmentally harmful subsidies that prop up non-viable agricultural activities, especially where such subsidies can be repurposed towards more resilient and climate responsive food systems.

Finally, I would like to emphasise once again the importance of this event and how critical it is that we maintain an open, science-backed and transparent rules-based trading system as we consider how to make progress together.

We must treat climate change and agriculture as global challenges that requires collaboration, not competition and protectionism.

Thank you and ngā mihi nui

NIUE

37th SESSION OF THE FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC(APRC)

High Level Ministerial Segment
19th -22nd March 2024-Colombo-Sri Lanka
MAM's Statement
Hon Emani Fakaotimanava Lui
Niue Government

Hon. Ministers, Excellency's, FAO Director General and Staff, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Fakalofa Lahi Atu and Greetings from Niue Island.

On behalf of the Government of Niue, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting the 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific including the hospitality accorded to myself since my arrival in your country.

It is indeed an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries -Ministry of Natural Resources-Niue Government who is unable to be physically here today due to other commitments. My presence here today also shows our commitment to the work of FAO and value the ongoing partnership.

On the outset, I would like to acknowledge the assistance rendered by FAO to Niue under the Country Program Framework (CPF) through various Technical Cooperation programmes and projects over the years. We look forward to continue our partnership and finding ways to further enhance the work and to build further from key lessons learnt towards delivering key and effective tangible outputs for the people of Niue. We want to re-emphasise the need to ensure that FAO programs are tailored towards improving livelihoods, increase economic benefits and food and nutritional security of our people and vulnerable communities and to support building capacity and human resources.

The Agriculture sector is highlighted under the current Niue National Strategic Plan (NNSP) as one of the key priority areas for economic development.

The current National Agriculture Sector Strategy focuses on five key objectives that underpins Niue's overall framework and development of its Agriculture sector.

1. Improve food and nutritional security for all Niueans
2. Develop and promote sustainable food production and management systems
3. Support sustainable economic growth and improve the balance of trade
4. Strengthen natural resource management
5. To improve the capacity-building of stakeholders and agricultural staff.

Achieving sustainable growth will depend on strengthening effective partnership and support for private sector development and increased foreign investment.

The Agriculture and Food Sectors in Niue faces many challenges in sustaining development and growth due to various key factors:

Niue's import bill is ten times higher than it exports resulting in significant trade deficit. The economy depends largely on foreign aids to support many of the government operations and private sector development.

Niue as Small Island Developing State(SIDS) , is depicted by its smallness- both population wise and its geographical nature, vulnerable to climate change impacts such severe natural disasters and extreme events.

Increasing reliance on imported food is recognised as a major contributor towards increasing Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) problems in Niue.

Our Region faces severe climate change impacts, including increased disasters and ecosystem degradation. Escalating climate change agenda and impacts on SIDS and non-communicable diseases, the economic impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine has challenged us in so many ways that we are vulnerable to economic shocks happening at the global level and will continue to affect our development aspirations as SIDS. The cost of a healthy diet is unaffordable for many and food prices continue to rise.

Sustainable food production systems faces several challenges such as lack of youth involvement, aging farmers and lack of affordable machinery to assist with farming activities.

We commend and thank FAO for its current commitment on the Priority areas of work in 2024-25 and beyond including the four Regional Priorities. We urge FAO to continue to focus supporting Members in these Priorities to implement consolidated actions effectively and efficiently, and fully aligned with the Program Priority Areas(PPAs) under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31.

We still rely heavily on FAO support in building capacity towards achieving these priorities that forms the basis towards achieving FAO's vision at the regional and the global goals of Members, through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

We acknowledge FAO's work and support to Niue under the Country Program Framework through the technical cooperation programmes and projects that is aligned to the 4 Regional Priorities and Strategic Framework.

We want to encourage FAO to continue its on-going commitment under the Technical Cooperation Programs and tailor made it to serve the country specific needs. We also like to highlight one of our priority needs that we have embarked on and currently work in progress with FAO over the last few years in bringing it to a reality.:

Biosecurity is crucial for Niue. As a Small Island Developing State(SIDS) and vulnerable to many challenges of emerging exotic plant and animal diseases, our priority is to sustain a low pest status and to prevent the introduction of unwanted pests into our shores that will affect our fragile ecosystems and food security systems . Thus, border security is the first line of defence and the need to pay more attention in equipping Niue with its capacity needs and tools to ensure we continue to be free from introducing further pests and diseases.

We have been working with FAO to procure a two way Heat Treatment facility under the last Country Program Framework. This facility is to be utilized as a Post Treatment facility for incoming goods; and as a treatment facility for potential fresh agricultural produce for overseas export.

We humbly urge FAO to re-consider our efforts in fast tracking the process in bringing this to a reality and is one of the Government of Niue's key priorities towards strengthening and addressing the trade imbalance (import substitution) and economic development through exports that is fundamentally crucial for our people's livelihoods and food security .

Niue, support the drive towards more innovation and capacity building initiatives that is fit for purpose within the agriculture sector, and encouraging FAO's innovation and data, research and technology that will entice youth towards working in the Agriculture and Food Sectors.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm our support to the **Four Betters** under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 in supporting the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems. For better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

Niue remains committed to strengthening the partnership and the work of FAO and we want to be part of improving on all 4 Betters and not to be left behind just because we may be small in geographic size and population.

Fakaue Lahi for the opportunity and Kia Monuina.

God Bless us All.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan - Country Statement by Minister for National Food Security & Research

On behalf of Government of Pakistan, I want to congratulate Govt. of Sri Lanka and FAO secretariat for organizing this regional conference. The 37th Session of APRC is geared towards addressing critical regional and global policy matters. These include evaluating the state of food and agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region, exploring financing mechanisms to combat hunger (SDG2), implementing strategies against food loss and waste, and promoting sustainable transformations in capture fisheries and aquaculture.

The agriculture sector is critical to Pakistan's growth, employment, poverty reduction and food security objectives. It accounts for over 22 percent of GDP, and 37 percent of the labour force, and is the major source of subsistence and livelihood for the rural population. However, the sector's potential is undermined by significant challenges, including inefficiency in use of land, wasteful and unsustainable use of water, pre and post-harvest wastage of outputs, and a weak irrigation system. The challenges to this sector are manifested in low productivity, suboptimal crop yields, and an inability to meet the rising demand for food in the country. Climate change is redefining every human experience on the planet. Despite being a fractional emitter of greenhouse gases, Pakistan is in the frontline of global impacts, with skyrocketing temperatures pushing the country and its people into a dangerous zone of climate fragility.

Given Asia Pacific region's vulnerability to climate-related catastrophes, proactive arrangement of resources from climate-related agencies, bilateral donors, and multilateral institutions is of utmost importance.

Pakistan is presently fairly placed in terms of production of major staple foods. However, to effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by increasing food prices and poor nutritional status - sustainable solutions are required. Macroeconomic imbalances intensify the food security situation for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

LDCs spend 14 percent of their revenue on debt interest, compared to 3.5 percent for developed countries. The LDCs in the Asia and the Pacific region are at high risk of or are in debt distress. Pakistan reiterates that it is time that world should move beyond short-term crisis response to strategic investments that strengthen food security at its roots.

In order to end hunger, special interventions for climate vulnerable countries, empowerment of women in agriculture and scaling up credit for small holders and landless farmers is of utmost importance. Pakistan would like to appreciate FAO for pushing the investment through its "Hand in Hand" initiative.

Pakistan appreciates decentralization efforts of FAO to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of the financial and human resources. Decentralization improves the efficiency and productivity of the Organizations. However, to better respond to Members' expectations, on a cost neutral basis and without negatively impacting the technical capacity at headquarters, country context specific considerations should be taken into account.

37th APRC has provided us an opportunity to discuss solutions to our problems. The active participation of stakeholders from diverse sectors underscores the commitment to realizing the shared goals of food security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. I once again congratulate Sri Lanka and FAO secretariat for holding this successful event. Thank you all.

PALAU



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

P.O. Box 100 Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

Palau Country Statement

Steven Victor

Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment

APRC37

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Excellencies, development partners, ladies and gentlemen. Alii! I bring greetings from Palau. I am honored to address this distinguished gathering and to share perspectives from Palau on address critical issues concerning the state of food and agriculture in our region, with a specific focus on agrifood systems transformation and solutions aimed at empowering our smallholders and family farmers in Palau.

The challenges facing agrifood systems in our region are complex and multifaceted. Climate change, population growth, limited workforce capacity, resource depletion, and market dynamics present significant hurdles to achieving food security, sustainability, and equitable development. As a small island nation, Palau is not immune to these challenges and we are committed to forging a path towards resilient and inclusive agrifood systems.

Excellencies, We acknowledge the vital role that smallholders and family farmers play in our agrifood sector to achieving food security and resilience. They are the backbone of our agricultural production, custodians of traditional knowledge, and stewards of our natural resources. However, they often face numerous obstacles, including limited access to land, limited workforce capacity, capital, markets, and support services. It is imperative that we prioritize their needs and empower them with adequate resources to thrive in a rapidly changing landscape of agricultural production.

To address these challenges, we need a comprehensive transformation of our agrifood systems, that is guided by science, socio-economics and by principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. We need to integrate our traditional knowledge and practices with the power of innovation, technology, and collaboration to create an enabling environment for smallholders and family farmers to thrive.

One key area of focus is enhancing access to markets within the value chains for smallholders and family farmers. With the support of the government of Australia, we have developed a digital market place called Project Okewid that will strengthen market linkages and improve our understanding of our production capacity. This project is still in its infancy and it will contribute to our Digital Village Initiative that not only improve market access for small holder farmers but improve data collection to support better production planning.

Additionally, we must promote diversification and value addition in agricultural production. With the support from Taiwan Technical Mission, we have expanded our capacity for piglet and poultry production to support small holder farmers. Along with our goal of increasing production, we have developed an incentive program to help support small holder livestock farmers to subsidize the cost of

feed. We thank FAO for supporting the expansion of our pig breeder program focused on building capacity of small livestock farmers to be pig breeders.

We have implemented an ADB funded project that has focused on 20 women groups to farm taro. The project focused on building resilience of small holder farmers by helping to farm taro in dry land as their taro patches were being impacted by sea level rise as a result of impact of climate change on low lying coastal areas in Palau. This project not only build resilience to agricultural production but also increase diversification of value adding as we have also built a food processing facility that supporting women group to produce other products from taro.

While, we continue to introduce innovation into transforming our agrifood systems, Palau, like many nations, is facing a significant challenge with the aging demographic of farmers. The youth population often perceives agriculture as unattractive or lacking in opportunities compared to other sectors. However, we must recognize that agriculture offers immense potential for innovation, entrepreneurship, and meaningful employment, particularly in sustainable and climate-smart practices. That is why one of our key priority as a government is to implement the first public private partnership with selected Palauan farmers to develop a commercial farm that is appropriate for Palau's context that blends our traditional farming practices, our strong environmental policies, with modern agricultural innovation as part of transforming our agrifood system to develop the next generation of Palauan farmers.

Excellencies, In conclusion, the transformation of our agrifood systems is not only a necessity but also an opportunity to build a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all Palauans. By prioritizing the needs of smallholders and family farmers, investing in their capacity, and promoting inclusive and resilient agrifood systems, we can ensure food security, safeguard our environment, and promote inclusive socio-economic development and grow the next generation of Palauan farmers.

Thank you.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Country Statement of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea delivered to the FAO Asia Pacific Region Ministerial Meeting, Colombo, 20th February 2024

Chairperson

Assistant Director General of FAO

Honourable Ministers

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to present the Papua New Guinea Country statement on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, who could not attend the Ministerial Meeting and allow me to convey his sincere apologies to the Government of Sri Lanka and the FAO.

Firstly, let me congratulate Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries for assuming the Chairperson for the FAO APRC 37th session Ministerial Meeting.

Let me also thank the Government of Sri Lanka for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality in hosting the FAO APRC 37th Session Ministerial Meeting.

Food and nutrition security is a pressing issue in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where challenges such as malnutrition, poverty, and climate change impact the population.

Child malnutrition is a significant concern, primarily due to low protein intake and poor diet diversity. As a result, PNG has a very high level of stunting of about 48% in children under five years old.

PNG has made some progress in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment from 24.6% in 2015 to 22.9% in 2020. However, the country still faces high levels of stunting, wasting, and overweight among children under five years old.

Besides under nutrition, PNG also faced the emerging problem of increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity, which is caused by increase imports and consumption of processed and ultra-sugary foods in the last two decades.

Climate change poses a major threat to food and nutrition security, with events like the El Nino droughts affecting food production and supply. PNG is now preparing for the potential El Nino drought that is predicted to occur this year.

The One Health concept is gaining traction in PNG to address various health issues, including food safety and security. This is particularly important in rural areas, where 85% of the population relies on subsistence farming and has limited access to healthcare services.

PNG is using the One Health Approach to address threats like Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) through a National Action Plan for AMR (2019-2023), which aligns with the FAO Action Plan on AMR (2020-2025).

Papua New Guinea with other Pacific Island Countries faced common issues and challenges of One Health in the sub-region, especially the need for building technical capacity in animal health since there is limited manpower capacity in this area.

PNG also supports the creation of a Pacific One Health Secretariat to coordinate the One Health efforts and promote networking in the Pacific Islands region.

PNG acknowledges the importance of FAO's support in transforming agri-food systems.

The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, which focuses on the four pillars of the Better Agri-Food Systems approach, resonates with the country goal to address the challenges and risks associated with natural disasters, climate change impacts, and weather phenomena like El Niño.

Hence, the FAO strategic framework provides the suitable platform for PNG to enhance the resilience of its agri-food systems to empower the farmers to engage in sustainable food production to increase income, improve food and nutrition security and reduce poverty.

Papua New Guinea acknowledge and applaud the FAO for the work and results accomplished in the implementation of activities under the respective four regional priority areas.

PNG is now actively involved in the implementation of initiatives like Hand in Hand (HiH), One Country-One Product (OCOP) and Digital Village initiative (DVI) to boost its agri food systems.

The HiH explores the potential of cocoa, coconut and vanilla value adding for investment opportunities whilst the OCOP targets the vanilla value chain focusing on the improvement of its quality and standards.

PNG Development Plans and Policies such as the current Medium Term Development Plan 4, 2023 to 2027 are aligned to the SDG 2030 Targets to ensure that PNG development aspirations fits in with the broader global context of development.

PNG has also formulated a 10-year National Agriculture Sector Plan,2024 to 2033, which provides the implementation strategies for the agriculture key result areas outlined in the MTDP4.

To conclude, Papua New Guinea endorse and support the FAO strategic and the four regional priority areas.

PNG will ensure that the FAO strategic and regional priorities are aligned to the MTDP4 and the National Agriculture Sector Plan through the PNG- FAO Country Program Framework to contextualize the FAO strategies and priorities to the national priorities and the local situation.

I thank you all for your attention.

PHILIPPINES

Statement of Country and Regional Needs

by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.

37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia Pacific

Colombo, Sri Lanka

20 February 2024

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you, esteemed Chair, Minister Mahinda Amaraweera, and the government of Sri Lanka for inviting and hosting us here in the beautiful city of Colombo.

I also wish to thank the FAO Regional and Country Offices for supporting Sri Lanka in organizing this regular session of the highest governing body of the Organization at the regional level to ensure the effectiveness of the FAO regional work in the service of Member States and the definition of its priority areas of work for the following biennium.

Allow me to share the Philippines' views on our country's priority needs in which FAO can support us. As articulated in our Philippine Development Plan for 2023-2028, the Philippines aims to transform the production sectors, such as agriculture, agribusiness, food logistics, and value chains, to generate more quality jobs and competitive products.

We need to urgently improve the productivity, resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability of our agri-food systems to make our farmers and fisherfolks more prosperous and our people more food secure. The Department of Agriculture has three (3) recently approved World Bank-assisted projects in which FAO may collaborate by providing technical assistance through FAO's grant funds in order to complement the activities in the WB-funded project sites. These are the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) Scale-Up, the Mindanao Inclusive Agricultural Development Project (MIADP) and the Philippines Fisheries Coastal Resiliency (FishCoRe) Project.

These projects aim to organize and cluster farmer and fisherfolk associations indigenous peoples' organizations, consolidate their produce, collaborate with the private sector for better market linkage and technology access, and sustain partnerships with local government units for more aligned priorities in agriculture development.

The "Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change or APA project, with grant assistance from the Green Climate Fund through the FAO, with co-financing by the Philippine government, is aimed at improving farmers' capacity to develop Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) enterprises, adopt financially and economically viable CRA practices, as well as improve the capacity of the government and private sector to build systems for scaling up.

Importantly, we need to:

1. improve investments in and uptake of science-based technologies and innovations to accelerate our agri-food systems transformation.

There is much to improve in mechanizing agriculture, maximizing the benefits of digital technologies, maximizing market opportunities by adherence to relevant international standards and market requirements, and adopting climate and disaster-resilient technologies.

The use of advanced technologies and access to real-time information across all stages of food production can improve food safety, quality, and sustainability while reducing costs and economic losses. These technologies should be tailored to local contexts, and extension services are key to their adoption and scaling up.

2. develop the blue economy to open up more opportunities that will protect, leverage, and optimize the country's vast coastal and marine resources and maritime domain.

Some measures of how this could be attained are through:

- a) the full implementation of plans, policies, and programs for Fishery Management Areas and establishment of reference points from science-based information and harvest control rules and measures for priority fish species;
- b) promotion of viable livelihood options for coastal communities to address the seasonality of fisheries, including adaptive, integrated, and multi-species aquaculture, engagement in agri-tourism activities, and other supplemental livelihood programs of fisherfolk and coastal communities;

3. strengthen our capacity in data collection, data use, and analysis tools to make sound interventions that would foster food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.

Many of the Members of this Regional Conference may share our interest in these three priorities.

As to common concerns where we can promote regional coherence on global policies and political issues, one cannot overemphasize the importance of regional cooperation, particularly in:

- a) addressing the impact of climate change on our agri-food systems;
- b) adopting the “One Health” approach to help us address threats to human, animal, plant, and environmental health and the associated food security and nutrition risks;
- c) ensuring open, predictable, and fair trade of agri-food inputs and products; and
- d) empowering family farmers, women, and youth as change agents in the transformation towards sustainable and resilient agrifood systems.

We must coordinate policy responses to prevent a food crisis due to various factors such as conflict, climate extremes, pandemics, economic shocks, high cost of agricultural inputs and nutritious food, and growing inequalities that challenge food security and nutrition at all levels.

The Philippines calls on a strong FAO country and regional office with robust support from FAO headquarters to help respond to our priority needs, noting that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

The Philippines recognizes that achieving sustainable food and nutrition security requires a whole-of-society approach with the government utilizing multi-sectoral and multi-level platforms. We stand ready to do our part and work with all stakeholders.

We are only 6 years away from 2030, the year we all pledged to achieve our shared objectives under the UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. This demands greater international collaboration, cooperation, and exchange.

Maraming salamat po at Mabuhay!

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Honorable Chair Mr. Mahinda Amaraweera,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Dr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the FAO,

I am pleased to participate in the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific today.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to H.E. Minister Amaraweera, Mr. Jong-Jin Kim, Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, and all staff for organizing this Conference.

Our food security is impacted by unpredictable factors such as climate change, rising costs of raw materials, transboundary diseases and pests, and geopolitical conflicts.

According to the FAO, the number of food-insecure people has increased by 9.2 percent of the global population in 2022, and about 1 billion people are still struggling with food shortage in the Asia-Pacific region.

As 5 years are left to achieve the SDGs, it is imperative for us to collect efforts to end hunger and achieve food security.

Amid the challenging circumstances, the Korean government is making every effort to promote agri-food industry as a growing business and to flourish rural areas in order to create more opportunities for all.

Firstly, we are disseminating smart farming which is based on data and technologies and nurturing young farmers through tailored support.

Furthermore, Korea is actively sharing its farming practices with developing countries, including by implementing the K-Ricebelt Project with 7 African countries.

Secondly, Korea is enhancing food security while improving farmers' income and strengthening agri-business safety net.

To prepare for disasters affecting agriculture that are more difficult to foresee and occurring frequently, Korea is expanding agricultural insurance and Direct Payments for farmers.

Our policies also include prior management of balancing supply and demand based on data along with improving the production capacity for major crops such as floury rice, wheat and beans.

Lastly, Korea is implementing policies for environmental and ecological sustainability of agriculture as well as rural area's revitalization.

We aim to promote the adoption of environment-friendly and low-carbon farming practices, and the use of renewable energies in rural areas.

According to the mid to long term plans, we are encouraging each region to provide quality housing, decent jobs and comprehensive social services to the rural communities.

Honorable Chair, Excellencies,

Our agri-food industry and rural areas have a lot more potential than we realize.

Development of agriculture and rural areas would contribute not only to the transition towards sustainable agri-food systems and food security in the region, but also to prosperity for future generations.

In light of this, Korea will further reinforce international cooperation and partnership.

To conclude, I look forward to this Regional Conference providing opportunities to garner wisdom

needed to address the challenges that agriculture and rural communities face.
Thank you for your kind attention.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION (THE)

Russian and English versions

Тезисные материалы по теме «Продовольственная безопасность и питание в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе: опыт борьбы с взаимосвязанными кризисами и дальнейшие шаги»

Вопросы обеспечения глобальной продовольственной безопасности продолжают находиться в центре внимания всего мирового сообщества и активно обсуждаются на различных международных площадках. Изменение климата, последствия пандемии COVID-19 и нелегитимных односторонних ограничительных мер, а также общая геополитическая напряженность оказали негативное влияние на и не без того уязвимые продовольственные системы. Как результат – нарушенные логистические цепочки, падение доходности фермерских хозяйств, неурожаи, дисбалансы в мировой торговле сельхозпродукцией. Россию как одного из крупнейших мировых поставщиков агропромышленных товаров это не может не беспокоить.

Несмотря на внешние неблагоприятные условия, Россия уверенно продолжает наращивать темпы сельхозпроизводства. Благодаря государственной поддержке демонстрируем значительные достижения в селекции новых сортов растений, разработке информационных систем АПК, применении новейших технологий, таких как дистанционное зондирование земли, роботизация процессов, построение систем управления производством, создание агротехнологий для разных климатических зон.

В наших планах к 2030 г. обеспечить цифровую трансформацию всех ключевых процессов в аграрной сфере. В настоящее время проводится интеграция информационных систем и сервисов в единую цифровую платформу агропромышленного и рыбохозяйственного комплексов.

Мы не только полностью снабжаем собственное население основными видами продуктов питания, но и активно поставляем их на экспорт. Именно поэтому Россия заинтересована в стабильности глобальных рынков и полностью открыта для международного отраслевого сотрудничества.

С 2020-го г. наша страна стала нетто-экспортером продовольствия. По предварительным данным, объем отечественных поставок сельхозпродукции и продовольствия за рубеж в прошлом году в стоимостном выражении превысил 45 млрд долл. США. Российская продукция известна во всем мире и поставляется более чем в 160 стран. Большая часть нашего продовольствия направляется в развивающиеся и в беднейшие страны.

Основной статьёй российского экспорта традиционно остаются зерновые культуры, а именно – пшеница. Однако также активно наращиваем поставки масложировой продукции, рыбы и морепродуктов, мясной продукции, а также готовой продукции.

Российская Федерация является не только надежным поставщиком сельхозпродукции на международные рынки, но и активным участником международных гуманитарных программ, осуществляемым по двусторонним каналам и через международные организации.

За последнее десятилетие страны АТР стали для нас одними из ключевых торгово-экономических партнеров. Поставки российской продукции в АТР продолжают стабильно расти. В прошлом году они превысили 10,5 млрд долл., что на 30% больше уровня предыдущего года. Надеемся сохранить такую динамику и продолжить расширять географию торгово-экономического сотрудничества с этим динамично развивающимся регионом.

Всецело поддерживаем усилия ФАО, направленные на укрепление многостороннего взаимодействия в области искоренения голода и

содействия странам в наращивании их национального потенциала в сфере развития сельского хозяйства. Российская Федерация и ФАО накопили значительный и результативный опыт совместной работы. Со своей стороны, готовы его развивать и далее. Только совместно, общими усилиями и на основе равноправного и взаимовыгодного сотрудничества наши страны смогут справиться с глобальными кризисами и вызовами, в том числе и в области продовольственной безопасности.

STATEMENT

**by Ambassador of the Russian Federation in
the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka L.S.Dzhagaryan
at the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
(Colombo, 20 February 2024)**

Dear Mr. Chairperson,

Global food security continues to be in the spotlight of the entire global community and is being actively discussed in various international fora. Climate change, the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and illegitimate unilateral restrictive measures, as well as general geopolitical tensions, have had a negative impact on the already vulnerable food systems, resulting in disrupted supply chains, falling farm incomes, poor harvests, and misbalanced global agricultural trade. As one of the world's largest suppliers of agro-industrial goods, Russia is naturally concerned about it.

Despite the unfavourable external environment, our country is steadily continuing to increase its agricultural production. Due to the government support, we are demonstrating significant achievements in breeding new plant varieties, developing information systems for the agro-industrial complex, applying the latest technologies, such as remote sensing, process robotisation, building production management systems, and creating agro-technologies for different climatic zones.

We plan to ensure digital transformation of all key agricultural processes by 2030 and are currently integrating information systems and services into a unified digital platform for the agro-industrial and fishery sectors.

We guarantee that our own population is supplied with basic foodstuffs and actively export them. For this reason Russia is interested in stable global markets and is fully open to international sector-specific cooperation.

Since 2020, our country has become a food net exporter. According to preliminary data, last year the volume of domestic agricultural and food supplies abroad exceeded \$45bn in value terms. Russian products are known all over the world and supplied to more than 160 countries, with most of it being shipped to developing and the poorest ones.

Grain crops, namely wheat, traditionally remain the main item of Russian exports. However, we are increasing supplies of oil and fat, fish and seafood, meat, as well as processed products.

The Russian Federation is not only a reliable supplier of agricultural products to international markets, but also an active participant of international humanitarian programmes carried out through bilateral channels and via international organisations.

The past decade has seen the APR countries become one of our key trade and economic partners. There is a steady growth in the deliveries of Russian products to the Asia-Pacific region. Last year they exceeded \$10.5bn, which is 30% more than the year before. We hope to sustain the momentum and continue to expand the geography of trade and economic cooperation with this dynamically developing region.

We fully support FAO's efforts to strengthen multilateral partnership striving to eradicate hunger and assist countries in building their national agricultural development capacities. The Russian Federation and FAO have accumulated a significant amount of experience and achieved efficiency in the joint work. For our part, we are ready to develop it further. Only collectively, through joint efforts and on the basis of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation will our countries be able to manage global crises and challenges, including those concerning food security.

Thank you for your attention.

SAMOA



Hon. La'aulialemalietoa Leuatea Polataivao Fosi Schmidt

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

Country Statement

37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

“Ministerial Session”

Colombo, Sri Lanka

19th – 22nd February 2024

Your Excellency - Mr. QU Dongyu, FAO Director General

Your Excellencies from the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Your Excellencies – Ministerial colleagues,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Talofa lava, Ayubowan

I am honored to address this esteemed assembly today on behalf of the Government and the People of Samoa, a nation deeply committed to the sustainable development of our agricultural and fisheries sectors, not only for the prosperity of our own people but also for the well-being of the entire Pacific region.

I would like to express my appreciation to the convener of this conference, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the host country, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The significance and bearing of this conference on Agrifood Systems Transformation for Samoa, other Pacific Island countries, and our Asia Pacific region cannot be overemphasized.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather here to discuss and share the pressing issues facing our region, it is evident that the challenges posed by climate change, environmental degradation, and food insecurity require urgent and concerted action. In this regard, Samoa reaffirms its unwavering commitment to prioritize the development of agriculture and fisheries as key pillars on its food systems transformation as outlined in our national and regional development strategies.

The Samoa Food Systems Pathway 2030 identified 14 pathway actions to transform our food system for a resilient and healthy Samoa. Moreover, Samoa's five-year national development plan called the “Pathway for the Development of Samoa 2022-2026”, and our Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan 2022-2026, highlighted the importance of a vibrant and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sector, which will create employment, improve our food and nutrition security, and reduce our reliance on food imports.

Agriculture and fisheries are not only vital sources of livelihood for a significant portion of our population but also crucial components of our cultural heritage and identity. They sustain our

communities, provide food security, and contribute significantly to our economy. Therefore, investing in their sustainable development is not just a matter of economic necessity but also a moral imperative.

Excellencies,

In light of the unique challenges facing our region, including the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, climate change and the vulnerability of small island states to external shocks, it is imperative that we adopt a holistic approach to agricultural and fisheries development. This approach must encompass measures to enhance resilience, promote innovation, and ensure equitable access to resources and markets.

Samoa recognizes the importance of international cooperation and partnership in achieving these objectives. We stand ready to collaborate with our fellow Pacific island nations, regional organizations, and the international community to harness the full potential of our agricultural and fisheries sectors for the benefit of all.

Let us seize this opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to the sustainable development of our Agri-Food Systems in Samoa and the Pacific region. By working together with determination, solidarity, and vision, we can build a future where our people thrive, our ecosystems flourish, and our region emerges stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Excellencies,

Samoa would like to acknowledge with great appreciation, the ongoing financial and technical support of the FAO through its FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific, UN Regional Coordinator's Office in Apia, and all other UN Agencies and development partners who have assisted us bilaterally, regionally and internationally.

Also, I would like to remind our gathering today that the time for talking is over, let us be proactive and assertive in transforming our agrifood systems, and be catalysts to bring about real changes to the lives of our Asia Pacific people, for whom today's conference is all about.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a lot of urgent work to do in the next few months, but the work is worth it and crucial in our efforts to move forward as an Asia Pacific Community. Samoa is committed to working in collaboration with all its partners for transformational actions for its agrifood system.

Thank you for your attention and God bless.

SINGAPORE

ITEM 14: Plenary Session – Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs

Country Statement by Ministers

Chairperson

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Introduction

Let me begin by expressing Singapore's sincere thanks to Sri Lanka for your hospitality in hosting the 37th FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific, and to the FAO Secretariat for preparing the meeting material and documents.

Global food security has faced increasing challenges in recent years. As geopolitical tensions, climate change, and disease outbreaks increase in frequency, there is an urgent need to ensure global food systems are resilient. This is particularly important for small nations such as Singapore, which are vulnerable to global food supply disruptions.

As such, it is important for all of us to take action to transform our food systems to be more resilient to withstand these pressures in the long term. This way, we can help ensure a secure supply of safe food for all.

Singapore's Priorities

For Singapore, to secure a safe and resilient supply of food, our strategy is based on the following priorities.

Ensuring Open Food Trade for Source Diversification

We actively diversify our food sources to avoid overreliance on any single food source. For this to be possible, food trade between countries must be open and free flowing. In this regard, the international community needs to continue to work together to maintain an open food trade system.

Growing local and technological innovations

At home, we are growing local to provide a buffer in the event of overseas supply disruptions. Our "30-by-30" vision sets our ambition to build the capabilities and capacities to produce 30% of our nutritional needs locally by 2030. To do this, we are embracing innovation and the latest technology to help our farming sector transform and overcome our resource constraints.

For example, agricultural methods like indoor vertical farming, a practice that maximises space utilisation by cultivating crops in vertically stacked layers, enable our farmers to optimise crop growth and can be more productive than conventional farms. Similarly, in aquaculture, we are exploring recirculating aquaculture systems that allow us to grow more with less. Urban farming can help countries augment their traditional farming sector and make the overall food system more resilient. By growing food in the cities right where people live and consume, we also reduce carbon miles.

Conclusion

The Asia Pacific region is large and diverse. Yet, I am confident that we share common priorities, including the urgent need to strengthen the resilience of food systems to climate change, the importance of leveraging innovation and technology to create new opportunities for food sustainability, and the vital need to ensure open food trade. Singapore is committed to working with all partners in the region in our collective efforts to safeguard global food security.

SRI LANKA

Country Statement for Sri Lanka

by Hon. Mohan P De Silva, State Minister of Agriculture of Sri Lanka at the High-level Ministerial Meeting

of the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

20 February 2024

Chairperson of the session,

Excellencies,

Honourable Ministers,

Heads of Delegations from Member Countries

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to deliver the Country Statement at the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific of the FAO, on behalf of the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

I take this opportunity to place Sri Lanka's sincere appreciation to FAO in particular the FAO team in Sri Lanka for the continuous support given for its development throughout the long journey of associations. Sri Lanka has been an FAO member since 1948 and a fully-fledged FAO Representation was established in Sri Lanka in January 1979.

I am pleased to share with you; our country's priorities of agriculture sector in order to transform it to a resilient, and a sustainable sector, with a view to accelerating progress which will also help in achieve Sustainable Development Goals related to agriculture.

Distinguished delegates,

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Sri Lanka contributing to employment, income generation, and food security. Out of the total workforce of the country, 26.5% is engaged in agriculture and 82% of those live in rural areas. Agriculture has been an important driver of poverty reduction and accounted for about one third of the decline in poverty over the past decade.

Sri Lanka's agriculture is characterized by a plantation sector and a non-plantation sector. 24.8% of gross export earnings are derived from agricultural export crops from plantation sector especially Tea, Coconut, Rubber and Spices.

Our staple food crop rice meets self-sufficiency while some other crops and dairy products have not achieved the same status yet. With rice self-sufficiency secured, a consensus has recently emerged within government that the country should capitalize more strategically on the opportunity to diversify the production structure out of the relatively low value food crops and move towards high-value agriculture and promote agriculture exports.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the surging economic crisis, the country was deprived and the food security was at stake. However, at present especially agriculture sector shows positive growth combating above challenges. During this difficult situation, development partners including FAO and many countries supported Sri Lanka in different capacities.

Excellencies,

In Sri Lanka Agriculture sector, we mainly targeted to increase productivity of major crops by using modernize agricultural practices. In this context different projects have been implemented such as “Agriculture Modernization Project” and

“Smart village Programme”. These projects have significantly enhanced agricultural productivity, sustainability, and resilience across the country. Through the adoption of advanced technologies, improved irrigation systems, and better access to market information and credit facilities, farmers have experienced increased yields, income, and livelihood opportunities, contributing to food security and rural development.

For the urgent modernization of the agriculture sector as a means of preserving not only domestic food security but also leveraging these resources to create a resilient export-oriented agriculture sector, the financial and technical support is much needed.

However, our commitment extends beyond national boundaries. The state of food and agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region demands our collective attention. The global and regional food security outlook remains precarious, deepen by climate change, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In Sri Lanka, we have witnessed the impact of these challenges firsthand, particularly in our agricultural heartlands such as the North Central Province, where droughts and erratic rainfall patterns have threatened crop yields and livelihoods. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action at both national and regional levels.

Building resilience through agrifood system transformation is essential for ensuring food security and livelihoods in the face of growing uncertainties. Sri Lanka recognizes the need for comprehensive strategies that promote sustainable practices, enhance productivity, and improve access to markets for small-scale farmers. Initiatives such as “Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project ”, which focuses on sustainable water management and climate-smart agriculture,

demonstrate our commitment to building resilient agrifood systems that can withstand the impacts of climate change.

Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow, as outlined in SDG 2, is critical for achieving our shared goals. Sri Lanka calls for increased investment in agriculture, rural infrastructure, and social protection programs to eradicate hunger and poverty in the region. In recent years, Sri Lanka has made significant strides in agricultural financing, including the establishment of special loan schemes for smallholder farmers and investments in agricultural research and development. However, more needs to be done to ensure that financing reaches those who need it most particularly marginalized communities in rural areas.

Excellencies,

To combat food loss and waste, we must adopt innovative solutions and promote efficient supply chains. Sri Lanka is committed to implementing measures that reduce post-harvest losses, improve storage facilities, and enhance distribution networks to ensure food reaches those in need. Initiatives such as the establishment of cold storage facilities and the promotion of value-added agro-processing industries are crucial steps towards reducing food loss and waste in Sri Lanka.

Transforming capture fisheries and aquaculture towards sustainability in Asia and the Pacific region is essential for safeguarding marine ecosystems and livelihoods. Sri Lanka supports efforts to promote responsible fishing practices, conserve marine biodiversity, and enhance the resilience of coastal communities.

Applying the One Health approach to accelerate agrifood systems transformation in the Pacific Region is imperative for addressing the interconnected challenges of food security, public health, and environmental sustainability. Sri Lanka advocates for interdisciplinary collaboration and holistic approaches that recognize the

complex interactions between humans, animals, and the environment. Initiatives such as the establishment of multi-sectoral task forces and the integration of One Health principles into national

policies and programs are essential for addressing emerging zoonotic diseases and ensuring the sustainability of agrifood systems in Sri Lanka and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

FAO's technical cooperation plays a crucial role in aligning with our national policy priorities, and we look forward to continued collaboration for the advancement of the Agricultural and Food sectors in Sri Lanka and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

I wish for fruitful deliberations and propose tangible programs that address challenges successfully. Together, let us strive for a more sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future for the Asia-Pacific region.

Thank you.

THAILAND

Thailand Statement

H.E. MR. ANUCHA NAKASAI

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives

The 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (Ministerial)

Item 14 : Plenary Session-Prioritization of country and regional needs

Country statements by Ministers

20 February 2024, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairman (H.E. Mr. Mahinda Amaraweera)

Mr. Jong Jin Kim , Assistant for Director General of FAO and the FAO Representative for Asia and the Pacific

Excellency

Distinguished Guests

I am delighted to be attending the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC), Ministerial Session today and would like to congratulate the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting and organizing the meeting so well.

Everyone at this meeting are well aware that the outbreak of COVID 19 has disrupted food security, induced malnutrition and prompting rising rate of hunger in Asia and the Pacific and around the world including unrelenting threat of climate change, social inequality challenge, mounting social aging are all threatening agri-food systems and unavoidably derailed SDGs endeavor of each individual FAO member countries. Therefore, it is very important that we need to work collaboratively with specialized agency like FAO to explore sustainable solution that supports the operations of FAO member countries in term of providing carefully designed technical assistant which based on scientific knowledge, much needed technology and cutting-edge innovation.

For Thailand's perspective, we have been collaborating with FAO to transform the agri-food system to become more "Resilience", "Sustainability" and "Inclusiveness" to adapt to climate change and various extreme weather that may erupt at any time. I would like to take this opportunity to share valuable experiences of Thailand with you all.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives under the Royal Thai Government had formulated 5-years (2023-2027) Agricultural Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation, incorporating activities designed to provide capacity-building in term of preparing farmers and business entrepreneurs for unpredictable climate pattern throughout the food chain, participative approach to phase out greenhouse gas emission, modernizing real-time database ideally designed to counter climate emergency, fostering climate intelligence and awareness building mechanism for the climate change preparedness and response including morale boosting and resource mobilization and capacities to assist and cooperate with relevant network.

In addressing food security and nutrition issues, the government has adopted the royal initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Promote the cultivation of vegetable gardens to enhance food security and the implementation of the agricultural project for school lunch and the School Food Safety Project which is a practical example that Thailand has long been promoted and eager to share with FAO member countries.

Furthermore, Thailand attached significant importance on creating awareness and providing knowledge to all sectors to protect, nurture, and preserve soil fertility and water resources which serve

as solid foundation of the food production process, ecosystems, and human well-being. Thailand as the advocacy of World Soil Day, 5 December, will co-host with FAO/RAP an International Conference on Sustainable Soil and Water Resources in early December 2024, aftermath the celebration of World Soil Day 5th December 2024, with various interactive activities such as high-level meeting, academic discussion, campaign activities to educate youth and farmers, public forum to exchange views between academics and farmers network. On this occasion, I would like to invite FAO member countries in Asia and the Pacific to join this event as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources, food security and food safety through the cooperation of global partnership in all sectors.

Finally, Thailand would like to reaffirm our commitment to with FAO four regional priorities continuously as follows:

- 1) transforming agri-food systems for sustainable production and healthy diets
- 2) accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action
- 3) supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agri-food systems and equitable rural societies and
- 4) building sustainable and resilient agri-food systems in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Thank you.

TIMOR-LESTE

Timor-Leste Country Statement

High-level Ministerial Meeting

37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)

19 – 22 February 2024

Excellency Mr. Jong-jin Kim, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

Chairperson,

Distinguish Guest, Ladies and gentlemen

I am honored to speak on Behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste in particular representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry, in this great moment, the **37th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific** and to reaffirm our commitment in contributing to the global actions for a-17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mainly for the SDG-2 (ZERO HUNGER), SDG-13 (CLIMATE ACTION), SDG-14 (LIFE BELOW WATER) and SDG-15 (LIFE ON LAND).

We are gathered here, at the time, which global challenge is rise, in particular hunger and all forms of malnutrition, climate changes, environmental degradation, biodiversity losses, pest and diseases, water scarcity and conflict that affecting all aspect of socio-economic in the globe, regional and national.

Distinguish guest, ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste is a small island country with today population is close to 1.3 million and the majority lives in rural areas which depends on agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forests for their economic base.

According to the Timor-Leste Agriculture Census (2019), 70% of the populations are engaging in agriculture sector for food and income generation. However, due to the remaining challenges facing by agriculture sector, the country continue to rely on food imports of at least 60% of the national food requirements. It is also, Timor-Leste has faced multidimensional challenges in the development of the nation. Poverty remains high at 41%, food insecurity and malnutrition remain a huge problem. The 2020 Timor-Leste Food and Nutrition survey indicated 16% of the population experience severe food insecurity and 47% of children are stunted which is above WHO global threshold. Recent IPC Acute report (February 2024) 27% of population, about 364,000 people, facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above). These pose serious problem for achieving the SDG 2 targets by 2030.

Distinguish Guest Ladies and Gentlemen

Clearly acknowledging challenges, Timor-Leste sets a number of priorities in its “Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030” where agricultural sector is identified as a sector for the development of this country aiming to reduce poverty, provide food security and promote economic growth in rural areas and our nation as whole. The Strategic Development Plan of Timor-Leste also highly recommended sustainable agriculture and natural resources management in the rural areas of the country to generate income and create employment opportunities for the youths.

Recognize that critical shift in Food Security and Nutrition, besides related policy element has been developed, the country is also committed to implement its national food system pathway as asserted in UNFSS in September 2021 and UNFSS+2 Stocktaking in July 2023 and in other context specific relation to promote Food System in the country.

Before ending my intervention today, I would like to highlight a few points pertinent to the topics covered in this conference

Impacts of climate change is affecting small farmers, livestock rearing and fishers (including water scarcity) are posing great challenge for Timor-Leste agriculture and food sector and this highlight our country needs for capacity strengthening to better prepared, including early warning, early financing and early anticipatory action to build resilience on food transformation system.

Timor-Leste also has concern on One Health approach through enabling conditions with key government institutions, agencies, stakeholders and donors support for focused on human, animal and plant health, agriculture, the environment (biodiversity, pollution & climate change), and disaster management, as interconnected system with others such as membership of the country to the Codex Alimentary, application for WTO accession, and actively participate in COP with designation of an ambassador for environment issues.

In line with Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) program on blue economy development, both inland and marine fisheries as well as optimizing ocean resources, we need more technical and financial support is needed for the small-scale fishery management and market access, quality control for fish production, conservation of marine fish, control of illegal fishing (IUU Fishing), with aim to contribute to transform Blue Transformation of aquatic food system in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste is willing to learn from other country in the region thus we look forward to engage and collaborate more South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC). Accession to ASEAN is another area where technical support on food systems transformation is required, as well as Timor-Leste position in the SIDS (Small Island Developing State) where mostly required collaborative and share experiences with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in deal with food security and adapting to climate change.

Lastly, keeping in mind all the issues and opportunities discussed earlier, on behalf of Timor-Leste Delegation, I wish to commend **FAO's effort to seriously considering the establishment of a Full-fledged representation in Timor-Leste** as a key step to strengthen FAO-TL partnership.

Thank you!

TONGA

37th SESSION FAO ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

COLOMBO, 19-22 FEBRUARY 2024

COUNTRY STATEMENT

KINGDOM OF TONGA

Hon. SIONE S. FOHE,

Minister for Agriculture, Food & Forestry

Chairman,

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings from the **Friendly Islands of the Kingdom of Tonga**. It is with a profound honor, to be here today, presenting the country statement for Your Excellencies.

But firstly, on behalf of the Pacific, I am very proud to extend our sincere gratitude to FAO, for fortifying its presence in the region, by establishing the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands in Samoa way back in 1996. And since then, the partnership between Tonga and the FAO has bloom and fruits beyond our expectation.

Chairman,

The Kingdom of Tonga is a country of **many-many-seas**. That is, the total area is **seven-hundred-thousand square kilometers**, but only about **zero-point-one per cent** is the total land area.

Tonga's economy is hugely dependent on **Aid and Remittance**, with a huge *negative trade balance* of about **Eighty percent**. However, *forty to fifty percent* of the total value of annual export are from agriculture products.

The population of Tonga, is about **one-hundred-thousand**, inhabiting only **thirty-six** islands of the total islands. To date, about **sixty-seven percent** of its total household have farms, and with those farms, about **ninety per cent** are **rural semi-subsistence farms**.

Chairman

Tonga is one of the countries of the world, with the highest risk to natural disasters. Tonga is located on the edge of the **Australia-tectonic-plate** next to the **Tonga trench** of about ten kilometers deep. Hence **earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions** is constant feature of our world.

The gigantic eruption of the marine **HungaTonga-HungaHa'apai** volcano in 2022, is equivalent to an explosion of **two-hundred mega-tons of TNT**, and a volcanic-ash bloom of **fifty kilometers high**, and a **Tsunami** that reaches **Peru**, South America, is ranked to be the biggest in the world for the past 100 years.

On top of that, the Tonga *climate-change crisis*, is more and stronger tropical **Cyclones** and longer *El nino Drought*. The *rise of sea levels* in the Pacific countries is on average **six-centimeters per year**, while Tonga is sinking at **eleven-centimeters per year**, and lastly of course, is the threats of the rising temperature of the world.

Chairman, Your Excellencies, Distinguish Delegates,

The repetition of pre-disaster preparedness, the disaster endurance and the post-disaster recovery, is a constant part of our multi-disaster world.

Hence, the national strategy for the transformation of our Agri-Food system, is in three phases: **first**, the resiliencies of the **pre-disaster preparedness** phase; **secondly**, the resiliencies to our capacity to withstand these **repeated disasters**, the **rising sea levels** and the **rising temperature**; **third and last**, is the resiliencies in the capacity to **recover** from these disasters.

So the cycle is repeated in every two to four years.

The Ministry of Agriculture, has always focused on **food security** and building the **resilience** and **preparedness** of the *human, social, resource* and *financial capitals* of the agriculture sector.

The ministry's current programs for: pre-disaster preparedness, disaster endurance capacity and post-disaster capacity to recover, are:

- the promotion of the *resilient traditional farming system technologies program*;
- the expansion of our national *Genetic Biodiversity for Plants and Livestock program*;
- the National *Million Tree-Planting* program;
- the intensified *industrial processed* of new commercial Agriculture and Food products;
- *the Piggery-Biogas-Vegetable Farming System project*
- the Promotion of *regenerative, climate-smart* and *sustainable* agriculture program;
- the ***Tonga National Circular Economy System project***;
- the urban ***Home-Gardening and Poultry-raising program***;
- ***Farmers Seed-Productions*** for cucurbits, fruits and vegetable program; **etcetera, etcetera.**

Chairman, Your Excellencies,

Tonga is here today, with the goal of consolidating our fruitful partnership, with this august assembly of the more advance and developed countries of the Asia and Pacific region.

That is, Tonga seeks all the available enabling technologies, the many new innovations, financial, and digital information needed for the transformation of our Agri-Food system.

In other words, **Your Excellencies**, Tonga is here for the “fishing lines” rather than the “fish”, to cater for our vulnerabilities.

In conclusion, Tonga hereby re-affirms its commitment to FAO, and again, acknowledge, the leadership of the Subregional Office in Samoa, with the many regional and national projects provided, from the **One-Crop-One-Country project**, to the recent **Digitization of Agriculture project**. Targeted for the South West-Pacific countries, including Tonga, with the aim for: *better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life.*

Lastly, may I offer, my humble and sincere congratulation, to the Government of Sri Lanka, for the wonderful hospitality in hosting of this conference.

I thank You All.... for Your Attention.

VANUATU

Country Statement for Vanuatu's Delegation

37th APCR

Excellences

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of Vanuatu, please allow me to thank the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting this 37th APCR in their beautiful country.

Let me please recall that Vanuatu experiences more than two natural disasters during every 12 months. For example, it is not uncommon that while conducting an impact assessment following a volcanic eruption, the affected farmers would also need to further relocate as a safety measure from an approaching tropical cyclone.

Within this fragile context of agrifood systems that Vanuatu confronts, our farmers have also increasingly become resilient. But this context also highlights the criticality of our reliable partnership with FAO.

We are happy that the FAO Office Network paper that was prepared prior to this Conference, articulates a model that will allow Vanuatu to retain the presence of an Assistant FAO Representative to continue to coordinate our partnership and programs.

The issue of data gaps has been raised during the Senior Officials Meeting, and it was reflected in almost all of the technical papers. This is a major challenge confronting our government and partners to plan and implement our national sustainable development plan (NSDP) agenda for 2030. And although we are grateful to FAO for supporting our agricultural census and a Post Disaster Needs Assessment last year, and our Voluntary National Reporting this year, significant work is needed to improve data availability.

We are happy to be included in the HiHi and One Country One Product initiatives, and we look forward to collaborating with FAO to explore our country's agrifood systems potential to benefit all of the people.

Our national agrifood systems require a systems approach, and this is why we are collaborating with FAO to advance our agrifood systems transformation agenda because it provides a comprehensive opportunity to strengthen our natural resources, for example, forestry and livestock, and to address the noncommunicable disease crisis. Vanuatu continues to prioritise the importance of strong border biosecurity, and pest and diseases management control, and an example of this is our ongoing programmes on Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle containment and eradication. Despite our ongoing efforts, we acknowledge the need for more support from partners to assist us in this important national priority, given its huge impact on our agrifood systems.

We appreciate the work of Ms Xiangjun Yao, the FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands and her team in continuing to strengthen our partnership with FAO to improve Vanuatu's food security.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by recommending that we reinforce the capacity of the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands so that it has the necessary resources to continue to support Vanuatu and the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

Thank you.

VIET NAM

REMARKS BY MINISTER LE MINH HOAN

at

37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 19-22/2/2024

His Excellency Chairperson of the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific,

His Excellency Dr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Excellencies, ministers and distinguished delegates!

First of all, on behalf of the delegation from Viet Nam, I would like to convey the best wishes to the Chairperson of the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, sincere thanks to the host country - the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka – and the FAO Secretariat for the excellent preparation for this meeting.

Distinguished guests!

Although a lot of achievements in the poverty reduction and sustainable development, the world is still faced by a range of big challenges like unpredictable climate change, scare and exhausted natural resources, pandemics, geopolitical conflicts...

Viet Nam is gifted with a land area of only about 33 million hectares, including 10.3 hectares of arable land, and the population of about 100 million. Our agriculture is of special significance for food security, social stability and livelihoods of more than 60% of the rural population, and contribute 12% of the GDP. In 2023, the agricultural exports were valued at more than US\$ 53 billion. Vietnamese agricultural products with improving quality and safety have reached 190 countries and territories over the world.

Our agricultural production pattern has been remarkably successful for many years. However, in this context, it has been showing certain limitations and facing difficulties and challenges, including both internal and objectives ones: aging rural labor force, exhausted resources, climate change, market fluctuation and changing consumption pattern in the world.

To deal with the above challenges, Viet Nam has been restructuring the agriculture towards more value added and sustainable development, considering such factors as trade liberalization, climate change, innovation in parallel with the control of food loss and waste. At the same time, Viet Nam is now active in fulfilling the international commitments related, including COP 26 and COP 28 on “*net-zero carbon emissions by 2050*”, “*the Global Methane Pledge*”, “*Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use*”, and “*the Emirates Leaders' Declaration on Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture, and Climate Action*”.

We are now implementing “the National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation toward Transparency, Responsibility and Sustainability by 2030”, the “Sustainable development of one million hectares of high-quality and low emission rice in association with green growth in the Mekong Delta” scheme, “One Health” initiative, and a range of other important programmes and schemes...

Ladies and Gentlemen!

On this occasion, I would like to propose some following focal points where Viet Nam wishes to cooperate with FAO and other countries in the Pacific-Asia in order to develop green and sustainable agriculture and food systems, enhance food security and sustainable development in the region:

Firstly, promote the food system transformation toward “green”, low-emission and sustainability; emphasize eco-agriculture/nature-positive agriculture, “circular” agriculture and rural economy; apply One Health approach, linking animal, plant human and environment health, protect the ecological environment, utilize natural resources properly, maintain and conserve biodiversity. We propose that FAO continue its technical assistance to build capacity for long-term strategic forecasting and integrated policy making for Viet Nam’s agriculture. Viet Nam is willing to work with related parties to pilot new approaches and share experiences with other countries in Asia-Pacific on Food system transformation and One Health partnership.

Secondly, make investment in agricultural infrastructure, not only for production but also for rural economy: develop agricultural and rural tourism; integrate gender equality; promote the role of agricultural production households, scale up effective and practical agricultural cooperative movement; enhance the involvement of private sector in the investment and expansion of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in agricultural and rural development.

Thirdly, formulate and update the national food balance sheet as the basis for production and distribution; improve education and awareness to shape healthy eating habits, balance nutrients and promote responsible consumption; reduce food loss and waste; and enhance green and sustainable consumption.

Forthly, promote to link domestic and transboundary innovation networks. Viet Nam has worked with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to establish an Food Innovation Hub for Asia; strengthen digital application to smart and sustainable agricultural value chains.

Fifthly, intensify the cooperation and information sharing to promote trade for the regional food security through the stable and long-term supply-demand balance. Enhance the cooperation and information sharing in sustainable management of landscapes and natural resources, including transboundary water and marine resources; comply with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and prevent IUU fishing. Strengthen the control and mitigation of natural disasters; promote cooperation in building an early warning system for natural disasters and pandemics; improve the sustainability and post-disaster resilience of agricultural and food systems. Promote South-South and triangular cooperation.

Distinguished guests,

On this occasion, on behalf of the Government and people of Viet Nam, I would like to thank FAO, international community and donors for the great supports for our agricultural and rural development for years and look forward to receiving your continued assistance in the future, especially in the activities as a response to the call of the United Nations Secretary General on climate smart and sustainable food systems in the context of “new normal”, making a contribution to realizing all the 17 sustainable development goals by 2030.

Thank you very much!