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**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MOSES VILAKATI, MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE,**

KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND

**DELIVERED DURING THE 40TH SESSION OF FAO CONFERENCE
ROME, JULY 2017**

Chairperson,
FAO Director-General José Graziano Da Silva,
Honourable Members,
Your Excellences,
FAO Staff Members,
Distinguished Guests,
Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address the Honourable Governors at the 40th session of the FAO Conference. May I start by extending warm greetings to you all on behalf of their Majesties, the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland and the entire Swazi nation.

Chairperson, The Kingdom of Swaziland expresses her sincere appreciation for the positive impact made by FAO-funded projects and interventions to our communities. The bulk of the work being done by FAO is contained in the five-year Country Programming Framework, which was developed through a consultative process. We applaud FAO for the approach as it takes on board all the priorities at national level.

Chairperson,

Swaziland contributes very little to the impact of climate change yet it is highly affected. It has been hit hard by dry spells and persistent drought, which has affected both livestock and crops. As a result, the country has developed resilience measures through the support of FAO and other development partners. Some of these include contour ploughing, adoption of climate smart agriculture, use of drought tolerant crops and conservation agriculture to mention a few. In addition, the government introduced fully fledged input subsidy program which has assisted the farmers recover after the drought.

The country has also seen the importance of promoting water saving irrigation systems and techniques water harvesting methodologies to conserve and store water for crops and livestock.

In addition, the country has further encouraged the expansion of irrigated land through involvement of private sector and development partners.

Chairperson,

The effects of climate change has also seen an increase in pests and diseases not experienced by the country before. For the first time army worms were experienced in the country and the region, and left heavy destruction to crops and vegetables.

Chairperson, in the Kingdom of Swaziland, FAO is very active and visible in the agriculture sector. The Ministry of Agriculture is committed in strengthening cordial partnership with FAO and other partners in sustainable natural resources management and development, and support to disaster risk reduction, emergency and climate change adaptation.

These interventions by FAO do not exhaustively address the challenges faced by the agriculture sector in our country but they go a long way in assisting us towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The activities are perfectly linked to this global initiative. In this regards, we would like to request continuous support in the area of agricultural statistics and monitoring and evaluation to enable us to effectively track progress at all levels and provide credible statistics to inform future interventions.

Finally, Chairperson, may I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland to thank FAO for the continued support provided to the country for agricultural development and also make an undertaking that we will dedicate ourselves to the implementation of agricultural development projects for our own benefit and the global community. We also applaud the decentralization program implemented in the region.

The population of the world is continuously growing and all the people need food. It is therefore imperative for the present generation to maintain sustainable production systems for future generations.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.