

Excellences,

Distinguished guest, colleagues, ladies, gentlemen,

1. On behalf of Mr José Graziano Da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, and especially to these series of events under the Theme 5: Ending Hunger, securing food supplies and promoting good health and sustainable fisheries.
2. The Africa region is an incredibly rich and diverse area with abundant biodiversity and fishery resources. The region contains diverse tropical and subtropical aquatic habitats including wetlands and dry areas, swamps, large lakes, major river systems, high montane lakes, closed basins and coastal rivers as well as the marine coastal habitats of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, the Gulf of Aden and others. These fishery resources provide food and nutritional security, livelihood and enjoyment to the people.
3. Small-scale fisheries employ the majority of fishers and fish workers in the African region and contribute substantially to food security and livelihoods through their role in providing nutritious food and generating local and national incomes. It is estimated that the sector employs roughly 5.7 million people, 22% of which are women.
4. In 2016, the number of total fish farmers in Africa was estimated at 304 000, compared with 91,000 in the year 2000. These numbers reveal the importance of Aquaculture in livelihoods, and especially on the youth employment. Indeed, the entire fisheries and aquaculture sector offers a huge potential for employment along the value chains including transportation, processing, packaging and value addition.
5. In Kenya, the fish production from capture fisheries and aquaculture is reported to be of 186 165 tons, with aquaculture representing 8% of the total.
6. There is room to grow and make aquaculture a substantial industry in Kenya.
7. FAO has been assisting the Kenya to develop the Aquaculture sector in accordance with the Government agenda towards the achievement of the agenda 2030. Several projects via the Technical Cooperation Programs and Trust Funds including the recent Africa Solidarity Trust Fund have supported the government to move forward its agenda.
8. One thing that we have understood is that to end hunger we must look beyond simple increases in food production. Producing more is very important, but is not enough.
9. We need to address the many issues that keep people from being food secure, including the lack of access to food which is the main cause of hunger today.
10. Boosting employment opportunities for rural young women and men is a top political priority in Kenya.
11. Kenya has challenges that are shared with the rest of Africa. These challenges include:
 - how to realize the full potential of aquaculture to reduce poverty and increase food security;

- how to take advantage of new technologies and innovations
- how to conserve our valuable biodiversity for future generations to enjoy;
- how to add value to fishery products and increase intra-regional trade;
- how to reduce post-harvest losses;
- how to motivate our youth towards jobs in fisheries and aquaculture;
- how to build resilient fisheries communities

Distinguished Guests,

12. I believe this conference will help us to reflect on those challenges and the tremendous opportunities present in the Kenya:
 - diverse aquatic habitats suitable for fish production;
 - diverse fishery resources and biodiversity;
 - a large and growing youth population;
 - a high proportion of people living in rural areas, but also the highest rate of urbanization;
 - improving technology not only in fisheries and aquaculture, but in information technology and communication.
13. Perhaps, one of the biggest challenges to develop the aquaculture sector comes from the inward policies; and the first step is “Setting Aquaculture as one of the Priority Areas of Economic Development”. I am happy to recognize this room because your presence represents the importance, not only Kenya but governments and partners across the Globe, give to Aquaculture.
14. The Blue Growth Initiative of FAO is well-placed to provide a framework for meet those challenges and opportunities. The Blue Economy is the new frontier for coastal and ocean states. Oceans are crucial for maintaining the earth’s ecosystem and climate, for moving 80% of the world’s trade, for feeding populations, for marine tourism. Current levels of ecosystem management fall way below the needs of the oceans.
15. I believe that, our common objective in this room is the development of a more productive, sustainable and socio-economically responsible aquaculture sector in support of food security and nutrition, poverty alleviation and healthy aquatic ecosystems in Kenya, in Africa and ultimately at global level.

FAO is your partner in this effort and I’m very proud of it.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.