



Speech for the Minister of State for Food and Water Security

Background: Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Minister of State for Food and Water Security, is participating in the forthcoming Committee on World Food Security meeting (CFS 47) and will deliver a 5-minute National Statement speech commenting opening the CFS. The contents of the speech are to be focused on the 15th report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), **'Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030.'**

HLPE functions to keep the CFS up to date with worldwide knowledge and abreast of emerging trends in food security. Its actions lead to more informed policy debates with the aim of improving the quality, effectiveness and coherence of food security and nutrition policies locally and internationally.

Date of event: CFS 47 runs from February 8-11, 2021 (having been rescheduled from October 2020).

Location: Virtual event conducted via webinar

Speech duration: 5-minute speech



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen...

- Thank you all for your time today to be here with us. It is a pleasure to be able to address you today at the CFS. It is unfortunate that we were not able to meet physically as planned, but nonetheless, our work must go on, and thanks to technology, it can!
- It has been just five years from the establishment of the Agenda and we are now facing a heavy setback to our efforts at meeting what was already a difficult target – achieving zero hunger by 2030. **The facts elaborated by HE David Beasley are shocking and an alarm for all of us.**
- While the pandemic has **imposed challenges**, it has also brought positive change into the mind-sets of people. Believe me, COVID-19 has made everyone look at the subject of **food security** very differently than before, and has brought food security to the **centre of attention of many governments**. Even here in the UAE, many may not have understood what the purpose was to have a Minister in charge of Food Security but through the last months have highly appreciated why the leaders made this file a national priority a few years ago. **So it is vital we make use of this new mindset globally to accelerate our efforts. As HE Gilbert Hougbo said COVID has been a wakeup call for us.**
- Speaking as the representative of a nation that finds it **challenging to grow crops at scale** due to a **lack of arable land** and being a **water scarce country**, the United Arab Emirates gained its **food security strength** by becoming a **hub for global food trade**. But, technologies and seed development has **advanced over the years especially in the area of Controlled Environment Agriculture** whereby crops can now be grown **at scale** using very little water and no arable land at all and in any climate.... this Ladies and Gentlemen has become **a game changer** for us and many other countries with similar challenges and has made us re-think our plans in the domain of food security.
- This has led us to develop the UAE's **National Food Security Strategy 2051** with nearly 40 programs and 17 KPI's. We, the Food and Water Security Office must work with all our



stakeholders across many sectors in the country to implement and drive the strategy forward. As Martin and Jennifer mentioned, we are taking a multi-sectoral approach moving forward.

- Among the many efforts the UAE has taken, I would like to shed light on a **cabinet decision** that was made in 2020 amid the pandemic to accelerate this strategic direction. The decision was the formation of a team to work on transforming the agriculture sector towards the **advancement of a modern tech-based** sector that harnesses the power of technology to achieve sustainable food production and transition to more sustainable food systems. This move was also made to attract more women and youth into this vital sector.
- I was honoured to chair this team that had representatives from the public and private sectors, research and development, International Organizations as well as the representatives of the farming industry in the UAE.
- I am proud to say that we created a roadmap to foster the adoption of Controlled Environment Agriculture in the country and developed a list of concise key interventions that are necessary to catalyse this sector. As highlighted by Martin and Jennifer, we took a holistic approach when considering the interventions and not just focusing on one segment like food production. The interventions include things like getting access to suitable credits, access to land for the activities of CEA's, efficient licensing procedures and also policies required to drive ag-tech to the next level. All these interventions have now been raised to the cabinet, it's taken us just under 6 months to do this whole exercise. The message I want to say here is that this is a great example of how **political will** or agency and working together with your stakeholders as a team can really help accelerate efforts and this is what we urge countries to do, as we don't have time to lose! This is an example of a systematic change as mentioned by HE Agnes Kalibata or a concrete action as mentioned by HE Dr QU Dongyu.

Ladies and Gentlemen...



- We congratulate the CFS on the HLPE 15 report and thank you for your efforts. We confirm that our national efforts complement the report, and that the extensive report developed to guide policy makers, such as myself and you, as well as all others in the sector, on how we can prioritize the right to food while simultaneously ensuring food security and sustainable food systems is a valuable resource. While the concept of food security has evolved over the years, the HLPE 15 report continues to incorporate and identify emerging issues to help guide necessary actions to lead us to a more sustainable future.

Friends of the Food Security Family....

- **Global collaboration and partnership are essential at this stage, we, the UAE, stand ready to share our knowledge and experience to further expand our collaboration in this area to create a future that is food secure for all.**
- **We are committed to leaving no one behind and are ready to work with all of you.**
- Thank you and stay safe.”

(611 words = 5-minutes)