



Speech

Of

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**His Excellency Mr Vilayvanh Phomkhe, Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Lao PDR
Mr Xaypladeth Choulamany, Director General, Department of Planning and Cooperation,
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR
Dr Samaychanh Boupa, Head of Lao Statistics Bureau,
Mr Nguyen Van Lieu, Deputy Director General, GSO, Vietnam and Chairman of the APCAS
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

On behalf of the Director-General of FAO and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all the participants of the Twenty-fifth session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS).

I am especially grateful to the Government of Lao PDR for its generosity in hosting this silver jubilee Session of APCAS in this beautiful city of Vientiane and for providing excellent facilities and an environment conducive to fruitful and productive discussions. I am personally grateful to you, Honourable Minister, **Mr Vilayvanh Phomkhe** for sparing your valuable time to inaugurate this Session of APCAS.

I am delighted to note that some 90 delegates and participants from 20 countries are attending the meeting. I am thankful for your continued keen interest in the work of the Commission and in the activities of FAO. Your active involvement in the activities of FAO, particularly for giving direction to its work, is of vital importance as reliable food and agricultural statistics are more needed than ever before for ensuring adequate and nutritious food to population.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

APCAS has now completed 50 years of its remarkable existence and during all these years, it has made valuable contribution by providing strong support and guidance for the development of agricultural statistics in the region. The Commission works not only to monitor progress in the development of agricultural statistics and takes cognizance of the needs of countries in changing times, but also sets directions for further developments in the statistical systems by providing a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing country initiatives and best practices. FAO looks forward to

receiving your priorities and directions for our future actions. In turn, I wish to assure you that we at the FAO Regional Office in Bangkok are always ready to extend our expert advice and technical support to the efforts of our member countries for improving their agricultural and rural statistics systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You are well aware that FAO's main mandate is to combat hunger and monitor progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG one, aimed at reducing extreme hunger by half by 2015. It is heartening to note that the Asia region as a whole is nearly on track to achieve the MDG hunger target. In 2012 itself, seven countries, viz. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Fiji, Maldives, Thailand and Viet Nam achieved MDG target. In 2013, China achieved MDG target and the situation further improved in Thailand and Viet Nam. However, progress in Southern Asia has been slower, especially in terms of the number of people undernourished. Most of the world's undernourished people are still to be found in Southern Asia, closely followed by sub-Saharan Africa.

Besides eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, FAO's new Strategic Objectives focus on sustainability of agriculture, reduction of rural poverty, and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis. Above all, our activities are now to be aligned to meeting the "Zero Hunger" challenge. FAO works with governments, civil society and the private sector aiming to bring about durable improvements in the lives of the poor. For sustainable food security, FAO recently organized a "Consultative Meeting on Rice Strategy for Asia and the Pacific," which was attended by more than 40 participants from some 17 countries of the region and representatives from development partners. FAO's Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction in collaboration with other partners also aims at combating hunger and malnutrition.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you may be aware, in 2012, the Secretary General of the United Nations constituted a High Level Panel of Eminent Persons to carve a development agenda in the post 2015 Scenario. The Panel's report "**A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development**" was recently submitted to the Secretary General. In its report, the Panel has set new development agenda to carry forward the spirit of the Millennium Declaration which envisaged integrating and promoting the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development with a practical focus on things like poverty, hunger, water, sanitation, education and healthcare. I would like highlight that "sustainable development" is the core of new development agenda, which is foreseen to be achieved through partnerships.

As we can foresee, the need for integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of development will place additional demands on the statistical systems. You will also appreciate that Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics has already embarked on this path of taking an integrated approach for development of national statistical systems to meet the emerging requirements

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are meeting amidst the historic grandeur and beautiful surroundings of the Vientiane city. A number of agenda items have been lined up for consideration of the Commission which are highly relevant for improving the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics in this region. Besides the issues relating to its activities since the last APCAS Session, FAO will provide an update on implementation of Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Bhutan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Samoa and Sri Lanka. We are working on this in collaboration with

our partners ADB and ESCAP and we propose to take up implementation of the Global Strategy in 4 more countries in 2014.

Another very relevant and timely agenda item before you is promoting South - South Cooperation to build country capacity to produce reliable agricultural statistics. FAO solicits support of all member countries to make their contribution to his effort. The New FAO Strategy on South-South Cooperation offers enough flexibility to accommodate different modalities for enhancing cooperation. Based upon your valuable guidance and contribution, FAO will undertake necessary follow-up action to further promote technical cooperation in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

World Programme for the Census of Agriculture started in 1930, and implemented under the leadership of FAO since 1950 had made remarkable contribution in improvement of agriculture statistics. In the last decadal round some 125 countries undertook an agricultural census, which provides the foundation of an agricultural statistics system. This Session will review the vision for WCA Programme 2020 in the light of the country experiences in implementation of WCA 2010 in the Asia and the Pacific region.

The Session will also benefit from a number of presentations on various topics including recent advances in economic, social and environmental statistics, agro-environmental indicators, system of environmental and economic accounting for agriculture, and agricultural market information system. The Commission will also have an occasion to review the conclusion of an Expert Meeting on “Crop Monitoring for Food Security” which was a side event to take stock of current methodological practices and to identify issues for further development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Commission provides a unique opportunity to senior statistics officials from member countries to come together to deliberate on important technical issues. I am confident these 4 days of deliberations and the resulting recommendations of the Commission would help member countries to align their statistical activities to the global standards.

Finally, let me once again convey my sincere gratitude to the Government of Lao PDR for hosting this session of the Commission. I wish to convey again my special gratitude to the Hon’ble Minister for his interest in agricultural statistics. I would also like to thank the governments of all the countries who have sent their delegations to this Session of APCAS. I acknowledge the hard work of the Secretariat of this Commission, particularly the Secretary and the Liaison Officer, in the preparation and organization of this meeting. I wish to thank my colleagues from FAO headquarters and the regional office for their technical contributions in making this meeting productive and successful. Recognition is also due to institution like Asian Development Bank (ADB), Statistical Institute for Asia and Pacific (SIAP), and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) who are our partners in development of agricultural and rural statistics in the region.

I wish you all success in your deliberations and a pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Vientiane.

Thank you.