

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY JAKAYA MRISHO
KIKWETE, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF
TANZANIA, AT THE WORLD FOOD DAY,
ROME, ITALY, 16TH OCTOBER, 2007

Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food

And Agriculture Organization (FAO);

Your Excellency, Horst Koehler, President of the Federal

Republic of Germany;

Representatives from FAO Member States;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to be invited to speak on this auspicious occasion to mark the World Food Day. I thank you Dr. Jacques Diouf for your kind invitation and for the warmth of reception. I am particularly delighted to share the podium with His Excellency Horst Koehler, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. He is a great statesman who has generously apportioned part of his big heart and precious time for service to humanity particularly to the needy

// and vulnerable.

and vulnerable. He is the right man for a discussion like the one dedicated for this occasion.

Excellencies;

Mr. Director General;

This is the first time I participate in an event organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization since I became leader of my dear country, Tanzania. I feel obliged therefore, to use this opportunity to reaffirm Tanzania's commitment to this distinguished organization of ours the FAO. I am happy with the state of our relationship and promise to do whatever is necessary to advance it to greater heights.

Mr. Director General;

I commend you most sincerely, for choosing a very pertinent theme for this year's World Food Day: The Right to Food. I reckon also that this discussion is being held at the right time. We are at a very opportune moment in our common struggle to wipe the scourge of hunger from the face of the world. We are already half-way through the

// time set by Millennium Summit

time set by Millennium Summit of 2000 to attain the eight Millennium Development Goals. Of particular relevance to us today is the MDG number one which requires us to halve by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. As we all remember this objective of the Millennium Summit was also the objective of the World Food Summit of 1996.

It is 11 years now since 1996 World Food Summit and 7 years since the Millennium Summit of 2000, yet we are not half-way in meeting the objectives of the two landmark Summits. At current trends, the 2015 target seems unlikely to be achieved unless we redouble our efforts both at national and international level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The scourge of hunger lingers on. There are little signs of receding, instead hunger seems to be on the ascendancy. Estimates by this organization (FAO) show that more than 850 million people in the world still live in

// a state of serious and permanent

a state of serious and permanent undernourishment. Sub Sahara Africa alone has 206 million people who are undernourished. This is almost a quarter of the continent's total population. At the same time, nearly 40,000 children die every day throughout the world due to malnutrition and related diseases. These are the people who are being denied the Right to Food. These are the people who are the subject of this year's World Food Day.

Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

These figures are not sobering at all. They reflect both the seriousness and the enormity of the challenge that still lies ahead of us in meeting the objectives of MDGs and the decision of the 1996 World Food Summit. They reflect the extent of the challenge of ensuring the Right of Food to all people on this planet.

But this world is a place of great contradictions and surprises. As hundreds of millions of people in Africa and the developing world live in conditions of undernourishment, evidence shows that there is plenty of

// food in the world.

food in the world. For instance, this year alone total world cereal production is estimated to be 2,114 million tones, while total cereal demand is estimated to be around 1007 millions tones. This is less than half of the cereal production. Ideally, no one should starve or die of hunger in the world we live in. Strangely and sadly enough, they do. This is not fair. This is not right.

Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen;

For us in Africa, indeed for the rest of the developing world, the ultimate solution to the seemingly chronic problem of hunger does not lie with food aid, however reliable the sources may be. The ultimate solution lies in the improvement of our agriculture. I believe if we succeed in fixing African agriculture, there will be no more hunger in the continent.

I find the Chinese dictum quite befitting, indeed, in this regard. The dictum means literally that "if you give a hungry man fish today he will come back again tomorrow and ask for fish, but if you give him a fishing rod he will not come back because he will catch his own fish". Let

// this be the spirit of this

this be the spirit of this year's World Food Day. Let this be the strong word coming out of this year's celebration. Let us commit ourselves to ending Africa's perennial food shortages by dealing with the problems constraining advancement in African agriculture once and for all.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The other good thing about improving African agriculture is the fact that it will expedite the attainment of MDG one with regard to both hunger and poverty. Agriculture is central to the livelihood of the people in Africa. About 70 percent of the people in Sub Saharan Africa live in the rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture contributes 30 percent of the GDP and 40 percent of export earnings of economies of Sub-Saharan Africa.

In my dear country, Tanzania for example, more than 80 percent of the people live in the rural areas and agriculture is the source of employment and livelihood.

// Agriculture accounts for 45

Agriculture accounts for 45 percent of the GDP and 30 percent of export earnings.

It is obvious therefore that if African agriculture is improved it will have a tremendous impact on food security and poverty reduction. There is ample opportunity for improvement because African agriculture is backward. It is in essence peasant agriculture, peasant livestock keeping (in most cases of the nomadic type) and peasant fishing (using the dug-out canoe). It is subsistence with low productivity.

African agriculture therefore needs modernization to transform it from low productivity to high productivity and from subsistence to surplus. As a matter of fact this is long overdue. We need to act. We have talked about it for many years.

African needs and deserves a Green Revolution to tackle comprehensively the problems and challenges constraining development and advancement of agriculture in the continent.

// Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In my view African Green Revolution should set its sights on overcoming Africa's major factors constraining fast growth and development of agriculture in the continent. Allow me to mention some of the factors that need to be addressed.

Firstly, there is need to reduce predominance of rain-fed agriculture and increase the proportion of rain-fed agriculture in the Continent. With the unreliability of rainfall on the Continent, agriculture has become vulnerable hence less productive. But, God has been kind enough to give man water on the surface, in rivers and lakes as well as ground water. What is required is for man to tap these resources and use them for agriculture. Currently, the proportion of irrigated agriculture in Africa is very minimal. The Green Revolution in Africa should give serious attention to the increase of irrigated agriculture in the continent.

// **Secondly**, the Green Revolution

Secondly, the Green Revolution should increase the application of science and technology in agriculture. Despite efforts made in all countries since independence towards improvement Africa's agriculture is relatively backward. In many places it is still the traditional agriculture we have known over the years. The hand hoe is still the dominant tool for cultivation; used by many farmers. Some have moved a step forward with the use of the oxen plough. But this is not modern technology. It existed before the birth of Jesus Christ. There is little use of the tractor in the Continent.

There aren't many tractors in the continent. Human sweat and toil is the dominant energy used. It follows therefore, that farmers in the continent will remain smallholder with the attendant problems of low production associated with it. The question before us is how to enable the African farmer merchandise his agriculture, have access to and use modern farm implements. He cannot continue to use the hand hoe and oxen plough deep into the 21st century.

// The agricultural revolution

The agricultural revolution has to ensure the availability and use of high yielding seeds. One of the major factors holding back productivity in African agriculture is the fact that our people use seeds that do not yield much. As a result labour expended in agriculture is normally not commensurate with what the farmer earns at the end of farming season. Africa needs an Agricultural Revolution that would address this problem and make high yielding seeds readily available for use.

In this regard, there is need to increase Africa's capacity in research and development so as to develop the appropriate varieties locally. There is also the important aspect of building the capacity to produce the seeds so that they are readily available to farmers whenever and wherever needed.

African agriculture is very much constrained because of very little use of fertilizer. The importance of the use of fertilizers to augment and maintain soil fertility cannot be overemphasized. It is a statement of fact that there is

// direct correlation between

direct correlation between the use of fertilizers and productivity.

At the moment there is very little use of fertilizers in African agriculture compared to other continents in the world. In Tanzania for example, farmers use on average 8 kilograms of fertilizers per hectare. In the Netherlands farmers use on average 578 kilograms per hectare. Obviously the Dutch farmer will get a bigger harvest than his Tanzanian counterpart.

This sad state of affairs has to change if African agriculture has to turn around. Fertilizers should be made available to farmers at affordable prices. I underline the words affordable prices because chemical fertilizers which are imported are too expensive to the peasant farmer who is at subsistence level of life. There is need therefore of assisting him afford the fertilizers. Subsidizing fertilizer prices is inevitable. I know it does not appeal in post structural adjustment Africa that it is necessary. It needs to be given serious thought.

// Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

African agriculture also, suffers from inadequate use of pesticides and insecticides. This invariably exposes agricultural crops to pests and a plethora of plant diseases. Consequently, both productivity and production are adversely affected. There is need to deal with this problem squarely to allow agriculture yield the expected outcomes. The Green Revolution has to take care of this important component of agriculture.

Thirdly, the African Green Revolution has to ensure that the requisite support services to agriculture are available. The first one is extension services. Lack of skilled farmers is a major constraint to advancement of African agriculture. Majority of our farmers do it the old ways. They have not embraced the modern ways of farming. They lack the knowledge to make them the skilled farmers who can practice modern agriculture. Skilled farmers can be created through education. It takes

// proactive extension workers

proactive extension workers who go round to the farms and teach farmers on modern agricultural and farming techniques and technologies to create skilled farmers. Lack of adequate trained agricultural personnel to undertake this task is one of Africa's nightmares for improving agriculture in the continent. There is dire need to increase Africa's capacity for trained agricultural experts. The African Green Revolution has to address this factor as a matter of urgency.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Lack of financial services to peasant farms is a major hurdle to improving agriculture in Africa. Availability of credit to farmers is a critically important service which is very scarce in Africa. Banks do not seem to be well disposed to lend to the agricultural sector. They argue that it is too risky. Those who suffer most are the small holder farmers. As a result they cannot access inputs and other services. They have no hope of improving their agriculture and therefore their living conditions. They are

// landed in a vicious circle

landed in a vicious circle of poverty. The Green Revolution has to look into ways of overcoming this major constraint. New innovative ways need to be involved to enable small holder farmers access credit. If we cannot succeed in this, then African agriculture will take many years to transform. This means the scourges of hunger and poverty will remain with us for many years to come. This is not fair.

Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The other problem facing African agriculture is the whole question of crop marketing. In many countries, farmers face serious challenges after harvest about where to sell their produce and the price they get for their sweat and toil. Fixing the crop marketing question is crucial to promote further advancement of agriculture. Getting an assured market and good price for their produce is an incentive for farmers to expand their farms and increase production.

Infrastructure is another constraint to African

// agriculture which needs

agriculture which needs proper attention. Where there is no infrastructure agriculture remains backward. There is no incentive to expand beyond subsistence because the surplus will not reach the market. Besides, it is difficult to increase production where it is not easy to get the necessary inputs and services. Because of lack of infrastructure agricultural inputs cannot be taken to farmers. An African Green Revolution therefore has to take into account the factor of dealing with the infrastructure question.

Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I have deliberately taken a long tour of the present situation of African agriculture in order to underscore the need and urgency of the Green Revolution so as to bring the desired transformation of our agriculture. For, I strongly believe that the only route to sustainable food security in Africa is through improved agriculture. There is no short-cut.

Secondly, I want to underscore the fact that African

// countries need and deserve

countries need and deserve to be assisted if they have to undertake and succeed in this revolution. Some will need to be assisted to design the programmes for the Green Revolution. A lot of technical expertise is required to conceive and design the various programmes. Many countries in Africa do not have the expertise. They surely need assistance.

All however, will need to be assisted with regard to mobilization of resources required to execute the implementation of the programmes and projects. As it is obvious, a lot of resources are required for establishing irrigation schemes, developing and producing high yielding seeds or even importing them; producing or procuring fertilizers and pesticides. Resources are also required to train and employ extension workers, build the requisite infrastructure and provide other services.

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am glad that this very organization, the FAO,

// which convened this very

which convened this very important meeting knows better about what I am saying. They have assisted many nations conceive and roll out their Green Revolutions. They provided the technical expertise in thinking through the programmes and designing them. The FAO is not a funding agency but they have been useful in assisting nations with programmes and mobilize resources for implementation. There is need to ensure that the FAO is properly funded in order to enable this institution extend this invaluable service to those who need it most. I also appeal for a receptive ear on the part of the development partners to pick up the call from FAO to assist in funding the implementation of programmes and projects so designed.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen;

Allow me to commend the FAO for a sterling job they have been doing over the years to promote and advance agriculture. They have assisted and worked with many countries to design and implement their agricultural development programmes. Many have succeeded and several others are headed for success.

// Tanzania is one such

Tanzania is one such country that has received generous support and assistance from the FAO in conceiving and designing the Agricultural Sector Development Programme. This is a seven year programme estimated to cost USD 2.5 billion. The implementation of the programme began last year, 2006 and its primary objective is to remove constraints standing on the way of growth and development of the agricultural sector in the country.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Tanzania I wish to thank you, Mr. Director General and your dedicated staff for the wonderful cooperation and excellent work done.

We, together, created a visible roadmap for the future of Tanzania's agriculture. The remaining challenge is the availability of resources to implement the Programme. For I believe if the resources are available as and when required Tanzania's agriculture will be transformed from a backward subsistence agriculture to a modern highly

// productive one.

productive one. Then Tanzania will no longer be in the list of food security concern countries. Instead it will become a surplus grain producing nation. No doubt about that. Since agriculture will have attained all round development that will surely go a long way towards pulling so many people out of the poverty trap.

Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We see some light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope for a major turn round for our agriculture. All that is required is the reliability and predictability of the donor support to compliment our efforts. Once again, I thank the FAO for the invaluable support and assistance. I would like to use this opportunity to thank most sincerely all our development partners who have come forward to assist us in this noble endeavour.

Mr. Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, let me emphasis that all our countries are capable of guaranteeing the Right to Food to their people. However, for most of our countries in the South

// this can only be possible

this can only be possible through a green revolution that would revolutionize agricultural production and ensure food security.

Yet these countries cannot succeed in this on their own. They need support from their development partners in the North. If this is done I am quite sure we will all be able to consign hunger to history in the not too distant future. Every citizen on this planet will be assured of the Right to Adequate food.

I thank you all for listening.