

INAUGURAL STATEMENT

**H.E. MR. NGUYEN TAN DZUNG
PRIME MINISTER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM**

**AT THE 31ST FAO ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
HANOI , 15 MARCH 2012**

*Excellency Dr. José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General
Excellencies Ministers,
International delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Today I am very delighted to attend and deliver an opening remark at the 31st FAO Asia Pacific Regional Conference, which Viet Nam has the great honor to host. On behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, I would like to warmly welcome all distinguished delegates to this important event.

First of all, allow me to congratulate Dr. José Graziano da Silva for having been elected as the Director-General of the FAO. I strongly believe that, with his rich experience and prestige, Dr. Graziano da Silva will succeed in this esteemed position, to lead and help the FAO to work more effectively and efficiently.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the last decades, thanks to the efforts of each every country, and the support of international community led by the FAO, global food production has made significant achievements and food security has been improved greatly, with many countries having succeeded in producing enough food for consumption. Many countries are also actively restructuring their agriculture toward increased productivity, quality and efficiency, ensuring food security in a more sustainable way, including nutrition security in close relation to eco-environmental protection.

However, ensuring food security and reducing poverty are still facing numerous difficulties and challenges, especially in the developing countries in Asia Pacific, where food production only account for 50 percent, while the population accounts for over 60 percent of the globe. There are still nearly 1 billion people living in hunger in the world, and 60 percent of them are in Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, the world population has reached 7 billion, and still rising. Farmland is reducing in both area and fertility. Water resource for agriculture is getting scarcer. The impacts of climate change are getting more severe. Countries also have to face reduced investments for agriculture due to economic crises. Barriers to agro-trade and the low income of the poor are restricting considerably their accessibility to food. The use of food for other purposes, especially for bio-fuel production, tends to increase steadily. Therefore, halving poverty by 2015 – one of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals – is still a big challenge and requires the best efforts of all international organizations and countries.

In that context, I warmly welcome and appreciate that the 31st FAO Asia Pacific Regional Conference has selected the theme of Food Security and Rural Poverty Reduction, with the discussions focusing on many realistic and current issues, with a view to ensuring a better life for the people in the region and contributing to the global poverty reduction efforts. With your full participation and high sense of responsibility, I hope that the Conference will come out with more aggressive and effective solutions to address the issues of food security and poverty reduction, especially in the rural areas. This is also a very meaningful aspect to Viet Nam.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Viet Nam is a country where agriculture has a core position, is closely related to the life of 70 percent of the rural population, and takes up nearly 50 percent of the country's labor force. Agriculture has a decisive role in ensuring national food security, contributing greatly to poverty reduction, ensuring social security and supporting the industrialization and modernization processes. That core role of agriculture has been further affirmed during the recent years while Viet Nam undergoing the impacts of the global economic crisis. Therefore, agriculture and rural development have always received high priority in our country's socio-economic development strategies.

After 25 years of Doi Moi (economic reforms), Viet Nam's agriculture has made great achievements, especially in food production, fisheries, industrial plants. Being a country with quite limited farmland area of just 10 million hectares, while the population reaching over 87 million – ranked 13th in the world, Viet Nam has emerged from a country suffering from food deficiencies to one that can produce not only enough food for domestic consumption with the population growing by 1 million people per year, but has also become the second largest rice exporter in the world. Over the last 23 years, Viet Nam has provided the world rice market with more than 80 million tons of rice, and is currently exporting many other agro, forestry and fishery products in large quantities. The agricultural export volume in 2011 reached 25 billion USD, accounting for nearly 25 percent of the country's total export volume. Farmers' living conditions have been improved, and the percentage of poor households has reduced steadily at the speed of 2 percent nationwide and 4 percent in the poor districts. Viet Nam has also been enthusiastically sharing out experience in agricultural development with other countries, which has been appreciated by the governments and people of our partner countries., as well as the international community.

Entering the new development stage, implementing the 10-year Socio-economic Development Strategy between 2011-2020, Viet Nam continues to strengthen the industrialization and modernization, fast and sustainable growth, in order to basically become an industrial nation by 2020. In which, one of the targets is to develop a comprehensive agriculture sector toward modernization, sustainability, large scale commodity production with high productivity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness; ensuring national food security; meeting the various demands for domestic consumption and exports; developing the rural area with a modern socio-economic infrastructure, and the rural economy is developed in close relation with eco-environmental protection; keeping a rural society stable; and the living standards of the rural people constantly getting improved.

In order to fulfill that target, we are actively restructuring the agriculture, with focus on exploring to the fullest the fields with high potential and comparative advantages; strengthening research and technological application into production, reducing losses in production and post-harvest; renovating land policies; re-organizing production to link with developing processing industry and product marketing; enhancing environmental protection and responding to climate change, especially sea-level rise; implementing the national target programs on new rural development and on sustainable poverty reduction; promoting state investment and introducing stronger incentives to attract domestic and foreign business to invest in agriculture, rural areas, green agricultural models, organic and high valued products, while using economically energy, water, fertilizer, chemicals; adapting to the increasing impacts of global climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Developing agriculture, rural areas and reducing poverty for Viet Nam in the coming time are a really heavy workload. Together with mobilizing and utilizing effectively the domestic resources, our policy is to strengthen further international integration and cooperation, in order to make a more favorable environment to attract more external resources for development.

During the past decades, the assistance from the FAO to Viet Nam has been extremely realistic and effective. At present, the FAO is a significant partner and technical assistance donor for Viet Nam agriculture sector. On this occasion, on behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, I would like to sincerely thank, and hope to further receive the support and cooperation from the FAO, international organizations, other countries, and all of you for the socio-economic development in Viet Nam in general, as well as for the development of agriculture, rural areas, ensuring food security and poverty reduction in particular. According to the forecasts, Viet Nam is among the few countries most affected by climate change impacts, especially sea-level rise. Supporting Viet Nam to respond to climate change impacts and develop agriculture for more effective and sustainable food production also means helping to ensure global food security, since at present Viet Nam's rice exports account for one-fifth of the total world rice exports, and many other agro-products, especially seafood, accounting for remarkably large shares. Viet Nam is also willing to share our experience and cooperate with other countries in the cause of agriculture and rural development, especially through the FAO supported and coordinated South-South Cooperation Program.

On behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, I solemnly declare the opening of the 31st FAO Asia Pacific Regional Conference.

I wish our Conference a great success,

Wish all of you good health and happiness,

Thank you for listening.