

STATEMENT BY GREECE

(To be delivered by Ambassador Themistoklis Demiris, head of the Greek Delegation)
(check against delivery)

Mr/Ms Chair
Mr. Director General
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

I would like, first of all , to convey the greetings and best wishes of the Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food Professor Athanassios Tsaftaris, who regrets being unable to participate personally in this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I will shape my short intervention on three key phrases, on three key axes: Huge remaining needs, impact of economic crisis, need to get adapted to new realities.

First the needs:

Despite the progress towards the MDG1 hunger reduction target, and the efforts in the implementation of the relevant FAO's Strategic Objective 1, (to contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition) a significant proportion of world's population remains hungry or undernourished.

We all know that the World's population is expected to grow in the coming decades. This, combined with local, regional and in many cases protracted crises multiply not only the simple human dramas, the international community has a tendency to underestimate, but also the factors that could lead to regional and world instability.

Even regions and countries that never before knew phenomena linked with poverty and malnutrition discover now that food safety can never be considered as guaranteed and that has a series of internal and external repercussions, adding to a scenario in which widespread poverty and hunger come to the fore, and underscore world imbalances in any kind of development.

And then the crisis

Against this background and to make things even more complicated, came the economic crisis, mainly in parts of the world that some years ago looked continuously self confident in economic terms. It is clear this economic crisis has undercut the

international community's means to respond to hunger and malnutrition challenges and to advance political stability and social cohesion at the global level.

On the other hand the comeback of poverty even in developed societies increased the level of awareness and the spirit of solidarity. The recent economic crisis, felt especially in Europe and in particular Greece, where recession has been going on for the last five years, has boosted the Greek people's sensitivity concerning malnutrition and hunger especially in cases of the poorest and most vulnerable population segments. The same goes I think in other places too.

This is an element, which we, in FAO, I think should also take into account.

Within this spirit I should stress that despite such economic and financial constraints, particularly felt in Europe, the E.U. and its 27 Members States have responded to food crises in a timely fashion, through various schemes such as the Food Facility program. The Jacques Diouf Award received by the President of the Commission last Saturday is a well deserved recognition of this achievement.

However, as I said, the needs are huge and the challenges bigger than ever and in order to have serious hopes that we can cope, even partially, with the tremendous task we have in front of us, we cannot continue with a spirit of "business as usual".

Extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary efforts and new approaches that fit the new demands.

Here comes the need to get adapted

In the current Global economic and financial framework which has severely impacted on the budgets of many governments, especially in Europe, and in our country in particular, we are, all of us striving to work more, to do more with less and we are confident that this Organization, our Organization will be able to do the same.

On the other hand economic and demographic developments shape new parameters and add to the demand for nutritive and balanced food. Responsible multi-sectoral and coordinated multifaceted actions are required. Consumer's choices are of critical importance because they not only affect the people's health but they also may have negative impact both on food security and the environment.

FAO has the capacity to help better streamline and combine, wherever possible such efforts and introduce and disseminate new working methods and technology.

Partnerships are extremely important in this task and the implementation of the Organization's strategic partnerships with Civil Society and the Private Sector have our full support.

In Greece we believe in the role of Agriculture in facing the global challenges. Moreover, through the European Union CAP reforms we have been striving for sustainable agri-food systems that are resilient to new global challenges, provide for the environment and supply adequate and affordable food. We do remain constant to this belief while adjusting our development and trade policies.

A holistic approach and integrated actions for sustainable solutions in the battle against hunger and malnutrition need to be adopted. Reforms might be needed at a global level. New food systems paradigms are worth of consideration and FAO's role is paramount in this respect.

Mr/Ms Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hunger and poverty are causally interlinked and some members of the global population remain more vulnerable than others, namely, women and children. Having said that, women's role especially in small farms' activities remains vital. Greece strongly emphasizes the importance of women in rural areas as a driving force in the development of sustainable agriculture and appreciates FAO's actions for smallholder agriculture.

The reformed Committee on World Food Security has already taken up a primary role in meeting the aforementioned challenges. We are keen to participating and contributing to the Committee's activities. Moreover, we underline and support the implementation of FAO's actions and programs in the Regional context.

We fully support FAO's initiatives such as the Action Plan for improving Statistics, including instruments for depicting regional variations in agriculture and food related trends.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Cooperation between the Organization and the M-S and Efficiency are the key words for the successful implementation of FAO's Strategic Objectives. Greece looks forward to further cooperation within the FAO and, not ignoring of course our present financial limitations, we will actively support the Organization's continuing implementation of its important mandate, in an efficient and effective manner.

Thank you for your attention