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Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to take the floor today and to have the opportunity to express my opinion on the regional priorities and the linkages with the new Strategic Objectives.

As you are aware, Europe and Central Asia are home to some of the world's richest and poorest countries. In this region, we have countries characterized by high economic growth and also developing countries with transitional economies and with medium levels of income. Rural regions in most of the countries and in particular in the poorest of those countries are densely populated and rely on agriculture as a source of employment and as a source of income for the majority of the population. Farms are characterized, however, by low productivity compared with other sectors of the economy.

Assistance to the region, therefore, focuses on improving food security, reducing poverty, improving productivity of farming, improving state services to rural regions and also capacity building for state institutions. Based on all this therefore, the recent Regional Conference for Europe held in Azerbaijan in April 2012 approved six regional priorities.

Regional priority one: improving food security and nutrition. Regional priority two: consultation with governments on policies for the support of sustainable intensive farming for smallholders. Regional priority three: management of natural resources, including climate change mitigation and adaptation. Regional priority four: control over the fight against pests and illnesses caused by animal, plant, and food products. Regional priority five: policy and institutional support to Member Nations for accession to regional and world trade, standard setting, and the organization of regional and economic cooperation. Regional priority six: support for the creation of an enhancing of global and regional organizations for applied research in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry.

These six priorities are a basis for the Medium-Term Plan for the period 2014-2017. The priorities were formulated on the basis of our existing requirements at the country level as reflected in state programs. The definition of regional priorities and the approval of the framework programs for countries is an iterative process which requires constant updating in terms of defining regional priorities. Thus, the regional priorities provide a basis for the preparation of framework programs for countries and their aim is to focus on efforts in the region and at the same time, there is a link with the strategic goals of the Organization.

FAO's Program of Work in the framework of its regional priorities contains outcomes at the country, sub-regional, and regional levels. It is also based on standard setting work in the region and is carried out by the field officers and by expert support from the head office. The regional priorities are also a basis for thematic work and actions developed on the basis of the country framework programs.

It is expected that the preparation of the work plans for each of the Strategic Objectives will be an iterative process that will lead to the establishment of a clear benchmark in products and services for the region.

It is expected also that the six regional priorities and the results, outcomes and services will provide a contribution to various strategic goals. The products and services at the national and regional level can be

applied with respect to one or several strategic goals in a multi-disciplinary manner. I would like to briefly introduce in this context, the regional priorities individually.

Regional priority one, improving food security and nutrition. This priority focuses on the needs of the central Asian countries primarily, mainly those countries in which food security is at the lowest level. According to estimates, the role of Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan in the global grain trade will rise from twenty to thirty percent by 2020. The products and outcomes of this strategic goal will serve the achievement of Strategic Objectives one and three. I look forward to the outcomes achieved by the Organization in 2014 and I pull for enhanced cooperation with the Member Nations in this respect.

Thank you.