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ENGLISH



COUNTRY STATEMENT BY

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*MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-
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MALAYSIA

*THEME FOR 39th SESSION OF THE FAO
CONFERENCE:*

**“BREAKING THE CYCLE OF RURAL POVERTY
AND HUNGER BY STRENGTHENING RURAL
RESILIENCE: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT”**

8TH JUNE 2015
FAO HEADQUARTERS
ROME, ITALY

**Mr. Chairperson,
His Excellency Director General of FAO,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. First of all I would like to congratulate you, Dr Jose Graziano da Silva on your re-election and Malaysia supports you in the challenges ahead in further reforming FAO so that the organization can play its part efficiently and effectively in the ongoing fight against poverty and hunger.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. Poverty eradication programmes in Malaysia started before our Independence in 1957. At that time, Malaysia was predominantly an agricultural country. The agriculture sector is still significant in the economy of the country, but has also accounted for most of its poverty, mainly in the rural areas.

3. Rural poverty was widespread at that time. Total poverty in Malaysia was 52.4 percent in 1970 and experienced a significant drop to 1.7 percent in 2012.

4. In the fight against hunger, Malaysia has successfully achieved the First Millennium Development Goal (MDG-1) target

having successfully reduced the prevalence of undernourishment which was already low at 5.1% in 1990-92 to 3.4% in 2012-14. This achievement was recognized by FAO at a special event for countries achieving the MDG in November last year.

5. The implementation of social protection and poverty eradication programmes in Malaysia was carried out by various Ministries through their operating agencies at the state and sub-state levels based on approved policies and programmes as well as supporting implementation guidelines. The major focus of rural development was through agriculture development as agriculture was the primary activity in rural areas.

6. Social protection programmes open the possibility for recipient households to invest in better nutrition, health and education, as well as in productive activities and assets. These benefits spread beyond the immediate recipients to their communities and the broader economy as recipients purchase food, agricultural inputs and other rural goods and services.

7. In developing the agriculture sector, the primary objective was to increase the productivity and income of agricultural labour, particularly those involved in small scale and low-technology or traditional farming and fishing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. Our National Agro-food Policy (NAP) from 2011 to 2020 focuses on improving food security and food safety of the nation transforming the agro-food sector into a competitive and sustainable industry. It was developed to increase farmers' income and quality of life.

9. The National Agro-food Policy has incorporated strategies that are in line with nutritional aspect of the food system to ensure that the people of Malaysia will stay healthy and productive.

10. In continuum war against poverty and in the lead towards a high-income country by 2020, a more inclusive development approach was launched by the Government of Malaysia in 2010: this includes equitable access to health, education and basic infrastructure and at the same time providing social safety net to the needy. Since its inception, thousands of families have benefitted.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Farmers are subjected to manipulation and unscrupulous profit taking by middlemen. Middlemen have created several

layers of intermediaries, lengthening the supply chain and increasing the opportunity for cartels to form, which in turn drive prices down for farmers and up for consumers. Bountiful harvest may not determine greater gain by farmers.

12. Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry, Malaysia has declared 2014 as The Year of 'War' Against Middlemen to ensure farmers get fair returns for their sweat and simultaneously consumers get a reasonable price of agricultural products.

13. Among steps that are being taken by the Malaysian government to minimise the role of middlemen is to have more farmers' and fishermen markets so that they can sell their products directly. Agro-Bazaars managed by Farmers Associations have been established in order to create bigger market for farmers and fishermen.

14. Farmers' Associations are also been given bigger tasks to improve the agro-food value chain efficiently. More collection centres have been established that would enable farmers to sell their products. One Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture has been given a responsibility to buy directly from the collection centres or even from the farms. This approach is to strengthen the farmers and fishermen resilience but also to ensure sustainable agricultural development.

15. To date, this initiative has shown positive outcome, increasing income of farmers by 8.87 percent. It has also reduces the price of the agro products in the market. The initiatives have benefited both farmers and consumers as well as overall economy.

Ladies and Gentleman,

16. Despite various initiatives focusing on reducing poverty and hunger in achieving food security, around 780 million people in developing regions still suffer from hunger and over 1 billion people are extremely poor, living on less than US\$1.25 per day. This figure calls for even more aggressive roles from FAO to increase the capacity of the developing countries.

17. I urge FAO to play more aggressive roles in reducing poverty and hunger, and to increase agricultural development. We must continue to enhance our investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure. The member countries especially the developing nations need your strong leadership to improve the current global scenario. Initiatives by FAO in establishing trust funds to support and assist developing countries to resolve issues such as in climate change effect, nutrition and many others are very much recognized. Malaysia for instance has experienced natural disasters such as flood and El Nino phenomenon within 4 months. The establishment of such trust fund would assist developing

countries affected by the disasters to lessen their losses in any way as well as to encourage them to start over.

18. I would like to request FAO to give a greater priority in addressing the global poverty and hunger situation through the Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) in the areas of sustainable agriculture management, post-harvest losses, effects of climate change, supply chain, agricultural data and statistics, and biosecurity. Malaysia in particular wishes to seek FAO technical expertise assistance on post-harvest losses and Malaysia Good Agriculture Practices (MyGAP).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Before I end my statement, I wish to thank the Director General for accepting Malaysia to be the host of the 33rd FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in March 2016. I take this opportunity to invite members from Asia and the Pacific region to this important event in our region. I look forward to welcoming you all in Malaysia – *which is truly Asia.*

Thank you.