

A Statement by Mr Wallace Cosgrow, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture of the Republic of Seychelles.

If we were living in an ideal world, then hunger, malnutrition, poverty and associated conditions would not have featured in the world agenda, and, surely not in our agenda today. TV screens and newspapers would have been devoid of scenes of displaced populations, parched soils, pictures of the impacts of floods, hurricanes, of drowning livestock and failed crops.

At the other end of the scale there would not be calamities of over-nutrition, the rising statistics of obesity in all age groups, the toll of non-communicable diseases. Once diseases of the developed world, they are now widespread and are pressing issues of the developing world too. The rising costs of medical care and treatment, the loss in human productivity are becoming our daily burden of grave economic significance, of missed opportunities and uncomputed loss to our GDP.

The obligation of SIDS to honour the free trade protocol as members of the WTO compounds further of their vulnerability. SIDS lack competitive advantages and comparative advantages. This stipulation of the WTO protocol essentially amplifies SIDS undisputable disparities and shortcomings vis-a-vis the larger countries. This translates into a strong external dependence of SIDS in their provisioning for basic food items, amongst other needs, with serious implications to national food and nutrition security.

I salute FAO and partners to declare 2015 as the International Year of Soils. This initiative inevitably focuses attention on soils still the principal medium for agricultural activities and food production. It highlights once more the urgency to pay attention to all practices which have a bearing on sustaining the productivity of the soil medium and efforts towards sustainable agricultural practices and better land management.

SIDS have finite land resources with many competing ends. Agricultural soils are limited with agricultural activities forcibly relegated to marginal soils of poorer productivity. This limits food output in the face of a growing population. A growing national food demand is met largely by imported foods, at high costs.

The predicament of SIDS in the national agricultural sector development efforts is further worsened by global warming and the ever more frequent extreme weather events. Evidently, these natural calamities add to the vulnerability load of SIDS.

Our land-based natural resource is small, many times with large portions of our land area under conservation. But the zeal of SIDS for instilling a high degree of resilience in our people is phenomenal, and our modalities innovative, obsessed with an ever more pressing goal of an appreciable degree of national food and nutrition security.

We have opted to conserve the natural resources of part of our Exclusive Economic Zones to lessen our international debt burden. We have negotiated enthusiastically with old and newly found international cooperating partners.

I seize this moment to thank the IFAD and the AFDB's assistance in the revival of our national agricultural sector and the boosting of our blue economy. Thank you to IAEA, the Kuwaiti fund, the many country representatives present today through their specific inputs in our food production sector under our bilateral cooperation agreements. To our Organisation, the FAO, for addressing the many small but important issues which eased us over the threshold for greater growth in the food production sector.

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen I thank you for your attention.