

Hon Duminda Disanayake
Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairperson
Director General of FAO
Honorable Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

At first, I wish to convey the best wishes of HE Mithreepala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka, and the Government of Sri Lanka to Director General of FAO, Mr. José Graziano da Silva, for his re-election as the Director General of FAO. I am sure that you will lead this important organization to achieving the set objectives of the FAO.

As the Minister of Agriculture of Sri Lanka, I am thankful to Director General, for having invited me for this Conference, which I consider a privilege and honour, to make this statement on behalf of Government of Sri Lanka.

Many of you are aware, that agriculture sector is the foundation of Sri Lanka's economy, with 70% of the population living in rural areas, who depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. It contributes about 10% to the Gross Domestic Product, and employs 28% of the labour force. Despite being a small island nation, Sri Lanka has a good potential for economic development through further improvement of agricultural sector, and therefore the Government is very optimistic of ensuring food and nutrition security of the country, through self-sufficiency and increase production of safe and quality food.

In this context, Government of Sri Lanka is placing high priority to the agriculture sector. Having identified the adverse impact of soaring food prices during off seasons, government implemented a special home gardening project during its 100 day programme to increase vegetable

production, and making available the agro-produce throughout the year in order to stabilize the market prices. The intention of this project was to establish seven hundred thousand home gardens, covering all villages of the country. Its prime objective is to strengthen peoples' economic status and minimize their dependency on market for food and nutrition requirement. This programme aims to raise food production through distribution of high yielding seedling and providing training for non-farming community.

A High Level Committee on "Food and Nutrition Security and Monitoring of Cost of Living" meets regularly to review the food situation in the country to make policy directives to address the issues. Moreover, the Government has introduced following policy measures to brace up aforesaid programmes.

- Expansion of paddy purchasing program, raising floor price of paddy and imposing a ceiling price for rice;
- Continuing fertilizer subsidy scheme with further expansion to other crops;
- Relaxing seed import policy allowing import of hybrid seeds;
- Provision of import duty concessions for agricultural machinery and other relevant policy measures.

As a result of these strategies and directives, Sri Lanka has achieved self-sufficiency in rice and maize, which are our staple food and main feed materials.

Nevertheless, the country is blessed with good potentials to produce pulses, such as green gram, soybean, black gram, cereal - finger millet, and crops, such as potato, chilies and big onion within the country. The current production levels of these crops are not adequate to meet the national requirements. Hence, the Government is in the process of launching special projects aiming to increase the production of these crops. In addition, we are now focusing our attention to improve the sub-sectors of

women empowerment, e-agriculture and agri-markets. Also, we will launch the “Zero Hunger Challenge” programme later this month.

To address the challenge of global food and nutrition security, investment in agriculture plays an important role in improving agricultural productivity. We should encourage all stakeholders at national, regional and global levels to work closely with the professionals in the fields of science, technology and industry to ensure that investment in agriculture sector is given a high profile in the country’s investment strategy for the sustainable development .

At this juncture, it would be remiss, if I do not mention the valuable contribution made thus far by FAO, in extending its continued assistance to our country by an array of ways and means in the form of various agricultural projects. This assistance has given a kind of relief to the government in terms of financial and technical perspectives, while the Government of Sri Lanka, highly appreciating the support being rendered by FAO, and we look forward to receiving enhanced support in future, under the Leadership of the Director General and his team.

Mr. Chairperson

As you would be aware Sri Lanka is the current Chair of the G-15 Group, which is a group of Developing Countries established to promote and sustain fruitful South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue with a view of achieving economic progress, stability and sustainable development. As the Chair, I would like take this opportunity to make a brief statement on behalf of the group.

Let me at the outset extend my sincere appreciation and that of the Group of Fifteen (G-15) to the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and his team for organizing this very important Conference.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization is playing profound and commendable roles on eradication of hunger and extreme poverty, food insecurity, while building resilience and catalyzing agriculture and rural development.

The G-15 views the 39th Session of the conference of the FAO as auspicious and timely, considering 2015 as a landmark year for the global Development Agenda that will see convergences of the international community in discussing Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, the post 2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in New York, and the climate change Conference in Paris.

With the adverse impacts of climate change on agriculture and people whose livelihood depends on agriculture, particularly small-scale farmers, there is a need to enhance research and empower institutions that will assist the most vulnerable segments of the world population and make them the focus of development and technology transfer.

The realization of the 2030 global target to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and extreme poverty demands multi-faceted approach in complementing economic growth and productive capacities; strengthening rural resilience through social protection and sustainable agricultural development.

Finally, the Group of Fifteen calls for reaching agreement on ambitious and inclusive outcome documents of the Conference that will form the critical part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.
