

[As delivered]



The Republic of Uganda

UGANDA COUNTRY STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HON. VINCENT SSEMPIJJA, MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE AT THE 39 SESSION OF THE FAO CONFERENCE, 6-13 JUNE 2015

Your Excellencies, the Ministers, heads of Delegations, Distinguished Participants, ladies and gentlemen

Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Uganda delegation, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, let me thank you for giving me the floor to deliver our country statement.

Let me start by congratulating Prof. Graziano da Silva for his reelection as the FAO Director-General and Ambassador Ngirwa, my brother, as the Independent Council Chair. They can count on Uganda's support and cooperation.

The State of Food and Agriculture paper highlights many aspects related to social protection, food security and poverty. In reality, Mr Chairperson, most of them are not new, as they have been widely debated in diverse fora, especially under the AEGIS of the Committee of the World Food Security (CFS). We note two categories of continents performing at two opposed extremes, where some did very well and others very poorly in addressing food insecurity and poverty.

Chairperson, we congratulate all those developing countries that have met the MDG Goal 1 of halving the prevalence of undernourishment. At the same time, as widely documented and vividly elucidated in this document, the number of people that globally faced chronic hunger in 1990-92, the base period for the World Food Summit was about 850 million. Today, 25 years later, about 800 million people are still facing the same problem. This puts to question the relevance of all the diverse intellectual discourses, diplomatic and political engagements that have been held in different parts of the globe. Admittedly, we have not paid adequate attention to the underlying causes of food insecurity and poverty. We should all be critically

reorienting ourselves to the question why and what went wrong; and on that basis, we should seek practical and pragmatic solutions to the challenges.

For sure, underinvestment in agriculture, infrastructure and social services is widely acknowledged to foment the problem of food insecurity and poverty. Another indisputable known reason exacerbating the problem is that the views and concerns of the developing countries are often neglected and not given due attention in global development agenda, thus leading to erroneous, faulty and ineffective interventions. For instance, there exist home-grown national and regional success stories and experiences in social protection, which are often ignored in preference for foreign ones. Started as local initiatives, these experiences, if adequately supported present high potential to foster social protection and eventually spur development.

Given the very limited time for this presentation, my delegation would like to reiterate the following aspects that require critical policy focus and attention:

1. Pursuing a 'twin-truck' strategy that provides safety nets while promoting investment in physical infrastructure and human capital formation. This is crucial for protecting and building productive assets that contribute to economic growth while reducing the risk of future food insecurity, Mr. Chair, the government of Uganda is engaged in a serious infrastructure development and capital formation.
2. The fact that the majority of food producing countries and the smallholders in these developing countries. Mr. Chairman, the smallholders are net food buyers. This warrants affirmative action to enhance supply of social protection instruments. These include both promotion and provision of agricultural input subsidies, public works projects, agricultural credit and access to extension services; with special attention paid to challenges faced by women, given their central role as family providers. Clearly, the justification to help producers to access technologies, agricultural machinery for tractorisation and others for irrigation and water for production, agro-processing and post-harvest handling has increasingly become more compelling.
3. Where necessary, policy reversals should be considered and implemented if they emerge to be the best options to address context-specific situations in order to reach the intended goal.

Mr. Chairman, the Government of Uganda places a lot of emphasis on improving all of those areas above and organizing farmers into producer organizations so that we empower the rural farmers.

Lastly, Mr Chairman, as we may all know, the way agriculture and food security will be addressed in the ongoing inter-governmental negotiations on Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York is not yet clear.

In our view, it is important that the voices of the smallholder food producers are given due attention and their concerns adequately addressed. The Committee on World Food Security, other relevant committees and bodies, in consultation with the United Nations Rome-based Agencies, especially FAO, should provide necessary technical guidance to the Member Countries in order to reach this reality.

With these comments, the Uganda delegation concurs with all the suggested actions in the paper, the State of the Food and Agriculture paper, and also wish to use this opportunity to thank you, Mr Chair, for giving us this opportunity, and thank all of the development partners and we assure all of them that Uganda is set to move with you, Mr Chair, and the FAO, and the DG, and you know, again, congratulate everybody for this momentous occasion.