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**Statement by  
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of the Republic of Albania  
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**The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate change, agriculture and food security**

Ladies and gentlemen, Distinguished colleagues,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you for the excellent organization of this very important event. Coming back to the issue of climate change, I do well remember as all of you, when we started our discussions about the potential climate change impact on agriculture some twenty years ago, nobody would have ever imagined that we would have reached to this time when we experience direct and serious consequences to our agriculture due to very rapid and deteriorating climate change parameters.

Of course, now we have to face the reality as my colleague from Slovenia, a country which is situated nearby Albania, indicated. This year we experienced a heavy frost unseen before. For sixty years' time, we never experienced such frost which inflicted heavy damages to our agriculture.

And in five years' time that I took over as Minister of Agriculture, we have been experiencing frequent floods never seen before. It looks like the weather has changed. The weather pattern has changed. We are experiencing a kind of tropical weather.

So we were used to some steady parameters of weather like steady rainfall during winter time. Now no longer. We don't see that happening anymore. We have heavy rainfalls, enormous quantities of water dropping from the sky and creating a lot of constraints, a lot of problems to our irrigation and flood protection systems, creating casualties, so this is something happening. We have to deal with it and of course this cannot be dealt on a single base initiative.

On the other hand, of course we are experiencing the emerging of diseases, diseases which were not seen before in our region. It started in early 2000s when we had for the first time bluetongue appearing in our region. Bluetongue now has been spread up to the northern part of Europe, affecting Germany, Denmark. It is no longer a regional issue. It is a European Region issue.

And it started by the fact that the vector starting diseases which were basically located in Africa, now have crossed Africa. Now they enter in our region and are carrying, of course, agents of disease. This year, you know, we were heavily affected by lumpy skin, an old disease affecting our cattle, created a lot of problems. We had a lot of losses and of course we see that even the disease which entered Europe a couple years ago, it started moving from the European part of Turkey, crossing Bulgaria, entering Greece, entering Albania because of moving North and I can bet that it will surface sometime in the Northern part of Europe.

So it is no longer a regional issue. It is a worldwide issue, something which we need to address in a concerted way. We need to put in place strategies of controlling this disease, of trying to refrain it, of trying to protect our animals through mass vaccination which of course composes a lot of efforts, joint efforts.

And of course we see that now our agriculture has to cope with this reality. It looks however that we consider that small farming was considered as a matter of fact, as a handicap for the development of agriculture. And still it is not considered to be so competitive to compare to largescale agriculture.

But when it comes to climate change, it looks like small farming practices can easily adapt to the climate change challenges compared to largescale farming. So most probably we need to encourage now and not reframe small scale farming considering what is happening in terms of climate change.

As a matter of fact, there are a lot of issues that we would like to discuss with each other but I am sure that everybody from you is experiencing in your own country, the consequences of climate change and its impact on the overall agricultural production.

My message is clear. We need to have concerted actions. We need to adopt joint strategies in trying to cope with these events which are, as a matter of fact, actually having a negative impact on our agriculture, on our food production systems, on our food safety systems because you know, higher temperature can also have a negative impact on food safety issues. So there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed in a joint manner, in a concerted manner, and only by having this common approach, we might hope that we can somehow mitigate the risk associated with climate change.

Once again, let me thank you again for providing this opportunity to address to this prestigious assembly and wish you all the best.

Thank you.