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‘CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY’

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REPUBLIC OF INDIA

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General and Distinguished Colleagues,

It is my privilege to be a part of this FAO Conference. The subject chosen for debate – “Climate Change, Agriculture & Food Security” is highly relevant for the present and for the future. India represents 1.3 billion people and 3.3 million sq. km of area. We are committed to the global efforts of building food and nutrition security for all of our people on a sustainable basis. We recognize the urgency of addressing climate change effects in this regard.

Mr. Chairman, this FAO Conference is important as we are meeting in the backdrop of our collective agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and Paris Agreement of Climate Change – COP 21. Across these agendas, Member-States have committed themselves collectively to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition and provide a meaningful life to everyone.

FAO India Office is working with us to incorporate Agenda 2030 in national and sub-national strategies, plans and budgets. Through this partnership, we are convinced that FAO is uniquely

placed to provide support both at policy and technical level and help realize the ideals of SDGs by addressing implementation challenges, data quality issues and strengthening monitoring, evaluation and governance capacities of national governments.

Mr. Chairman, SDG 13 – Climate Action has strong inter-linkages with SDGs 1 and 2. I am sharing this based on my experiences as the Minister looking after the Agriculture sector in India, and also as a practicing farmer over past 40 years. I am convinced, that impact of climate change on agriculture and consequently on the lives of the farmer is a certainty. In India, we have witnessed 2 consecutive years of drought, warmer winters affecting yields, erratic rainfall and changes in disease patterns of plant, livestock and fisheries.

Mr. Chairman, India has to support 17% of world's population on just 2.4% of its geographical area and with just 1% of water. 85% of our farmers are smallholders. Land division and fragmentation are a challenge to viability and profitability of farming. In spite of such structural problems of agriculture sector in India, I am happy to share impressive achievements of our farmers. During 2016-17, we have achieved record food grain production of 273.37 million metric tons. We have also achieved record production of pulses of 22.4 million metric tons making the country near self-sufficient in pulses. Our farmers have been doing well in other sectors including horticulture, dairy, poultry and fishery. India finds place in the top production bracket globally.

Mr. Chairman, while mentioning these achievements, we are aware about our responsibilities of sustaining and enhancing the production in view of increasing population, changing consumption pattern and challenges posed by climate change. Over the last 3 years, we have gone back to drawing board and have realigned our strategies to enhance resilience of small holders to the impact of climate change on one hand and adopt sustainable production systems on the other.

Mr. Chairman, I want to mention few interventions we have taken to cover the risks associated with farming and for making agriculture system resilient to climate change.

- We have launched one of the largest agriculture insurance schemes in terms of coverage of farmers. In the first year of this scheme called “Prime Minister Agriculture Insurance Scheme”, 57 million farmers have been covered with sum insured of US \$ 32 billion.
- Secondly, we have launched Soil Health Card scheme wherein once in 2 years, each farmer will be provided with a Card indicating the nutrient status of his agricultural land. This will enable him to adopt need-based and balanced use of fertilizers and soil amendments. Out of 140 million farmers, 87 million farmers have already been provided with this card.
- We are now supplying Neem Coated Urea i.e. urea coated with *Azadirachta Indica*. This has resulted in savings of 10% of nitrogenous fertilizer because of slow and efficient release of fertilizer to plants.
- Further, micro-irrigation systems are promoted to enhance water use efficiency. This vision of our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi of “more crop per drop” is bringing relief to the monsoon dependent farmers.
- We are one of the first in the world to have adopted a separate Agro forestry Policy in 2014 and now as a follow up of this, we have launched a Sub Mission on Agro forestry. This will generate additional farm incomes and contribute to our national target of reducing atmospheric carbon by 2.5 to 3 billion tons by 2030.

Mr. Chairman, now I would like to attract your attention towards the need to diversify our consumption basket in view of varying influence of climate change on crops. At present wheat, rice and maize provide for 50 percent of world’s plant derived food energy. Over the last few decades, the importance of millets in our food plates has declined. The value of Millets as health food needs to be recognized. Our knowledge shows that millets should be ideally called ‘climate smart nutri-cereals’. These are hardy crops and well suited to regions that suffer from abiotic stress. We propose that FAO takes up research activities and advocacy to popularize these millets on a major scale, particularly in arid and semi-arid tropics. To bring desired focus on millets, I would propose for consideration of members of FAO that we work towards declaring an International year of Millets.

Mr. Chairman, Climate finance is an important aspect of achieving increased investments in climate smart technologies. Smallholders in developing countries have limited access and capacity to invest in sustainable food production systems. Therefore, there is need to increase climate finance availability to agriculture and addressing capacity constraints in accessing and effective use of climate finance, especially in developing countries. Smallholders access to climate finance may prove to be a catalyst that helps leverage larger flow of public and private funding into sustainable agriculture

Before I conclude, I would like to state that agricultural growth is one of the top priority of our Government and we are addressing the concerns of our farming community with renewed focus. The approach is not only to ensure food and nutrition security of our people, but also to enhance incomes of our farmers. It is the vision of our Prime Minister to double the income of our farmers by 2022. We are committed to our farmers especially small holders and women farmers and look forward to a fruitful partnership with FAO and with all of you, in eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

I thank you for the opportunity given and I wish the conference success in its deliberations.

Thank you.