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REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE
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Thank you, Mr Chairman, for giving me the floor. May I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this conference and commend you on the very able and competent manner in which you are conducting our deliberations.

Let me also thank the Secretariat for the comprehensive document they have prepared to guide our discussion on this important topic.

I also want to thank you the Director General, Professor Graziano Da Silva, for the excellent work that he is doing.

Two important points stand out in this document. The first is that developing countries will be disproportionately affected by climate change. The second is that these countries need support for adaptation and mitigation if they are to protect the livelihoods of the rural poor who depend mostly on agriculture and I think already spoken by previous speakers.

In the Southern Africa region, in general, and in Zimbabwe, in particular, the effects of climate change are already being felt. We have suffered from successive droughts, with the most severe being the El Nino-induced drought in the 2015-2016 cropping season. As a result, Zimbabwe had to spend scarce resources of 5 hundred million USD importing food, putting further pressure on an economy that is already struggling because of illegal sanctions imposed by some countries.

But this year 2016-2017, has been good in terms of rainfall. Although the rains came late, it rained consistently throughout the season. In some areas we even had floods which damaged infrastructure and killed livestock. That notwithstanding, the government of Zimbabwe decided to take advantage of the abundant rainfall and introduced the Special Maize Programme for Import Substitution, dubbed “Command Agriculture.” The programme was meant to provide cheap financing for agriculture and targeted farmers with access to irrigation water and better rainfall. Participation in the programme was voluntary and farmers were provided all-round support on a cost recovery

basis. The funds were sourced from local private players who saw business opportunities in the programme. As we speak, local commercial banks are lining up to participate in the programme in the 2017-18 cropping season.

The Special Maize Programme for Import Substitution, which has been hugely successful, complemented two ongoing programmes, namely, the Presidential Inputs Scheme and the More Food Africa Programme, which were introduced to increase food production by smallholder farmers in the face of climate change. The Presidential Inputs Scheme has been running for the past seven years and targets households in rural areas. On the other hand, the More Food Programme, which we are implementing jointly with Brazil, has provided mechanisation for tillage and irrigation equipment. This is a typical example of South-South cooperation.

As a result of the three programmes, the good rains and the hard work of our farmers, there has been a phenomenal increase in output across all food crops. Cereals, tubers and pulses in particular have increased by 321%. Sorghum has increased by 401% and pulses have increased by 328%. Overall, therefore, we are expecting to harvest slightly over 4 million metric tonnes from all food crops against a national requirement of 2 595 527 Mt. This means generically speaking Zimbabwe will have a surplus of slightly over 1 million metric tonnes to be marketed.

The three programmes will continue into 2018 and beyond, with the Presidential Inputs Scheme targeting this coming season 1.8 million households, 400 000 of which will be supported with a cash crop that is cotton.

This week the Government of Zimbabwe will also introduce a programme on Livestock that will include also Fisheries and Wildlife Farming as a Special Programme to utilize marginal land that we think should be reserved for purposes of being included in a process of environment mitigation. It is prudent to undertake this programme this way because sometimes we are allowing farmers to operate on marginal land that is not suitable for direct cropping.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chair, by saying that we would like therefore to see FAO scale up the work it has started to do and in particular with the Southern Africa Region. We also appeal, particularly facing the challenges of diseases and pests, we appeal that FAO looks with greater efforts to support the efforts that we started undertaking relating to these issues.

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.