

**Statement delivered by
His Excellency Nadeem Riyaz
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to FAO
on the occasion of the
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)
26 June 2019**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this august gathering.

Pakistan and FAO share a relationship spanning over six decades. We regard FAO as an important partner and appreciate its ongoing activities and support for development of our agricultural sector, educating all stakeholders, cross-sectoral coordination and technical support for evidence-based policy making.

The Award we are receiving this year for controlling Foot and Mouth Disease in Pakistan with the technical support of FAO, is an example of challenges that can be overcome through collaboration.

Excellencies,

In Pakistan, the Agriculture Sector contributes approximately 18% to GDP, employs nearly 40% of the labor force and 70 percent of our exports. Nearly half of our population is, directly or indirectly, dependent on it for their livelihood.

Our landholdings have been fragmenting over the past few generations and land ownership remains highly concentrated; with an estimated 2 percent of households controlling 30% of total cultivable land and the remaining 98 percent with 70 percent of the land. We also have a significant number of landless farmers.

Water stress, need for rural innovation, developing entrepreneurial skills of marginalized and small farmers, enhancing agricultural productivity and social uplift of rural households are major challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The present government in Pakistan is focused on overcoming the challenges of poverty, income disparity, stunting growth, household food security, eradicating malnutrition, social uplift and better living conditions for the masses.

Agriculture remains on top of the government agenda. The vision of the Prime Minister is to achieve accelerated agricultural growth by transforming our rural economy into a modern one based on innovations and best practices.

We are committed to improving the growth of Agriculture Sector by providing an enabling environment for rural transformation through innovation and entrepreneurship including employment opportunities for the youth. We aim to achieve food security through crop diversification, sustainable practices and increased focus on research and development.

On Climate change, the government has taken a number of initiatives including the clean and green Pakistan program to deal with threats posed by climatic issues including natural disasters.

Distinguished Delegates,

Pakistan together with FAO, hopes to continue and further expand its collaborative programs for climate resilient agriculture, water smart initiatives, long-term disaster management and prevention and control of livestock diseases.

The ongoing programs financed by FAO support Pakistan in our endeavors to achieve our priorities and to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We are thankful to the FAO for its valuable partnership and recognize the beneficial work of its country office in Islamabad. We look forward to our continued engagement.

Excellencies,

Pakistan deeply appreciates the contributions of outgoing Director- General Dr José Graziano da Silva who will always be remembered for his initiatives and leadership skills which guided the FAO over the last eight years. We wish him health and success in his future endeavors.

Pakistan welcomes the new Director-General Dr Qu Dongyu, and looks forward to working closely with him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, conflicts, migration, displacement and climate change impact food security, health and the living conditions of the masses. It is essential to tackle these issues for achieving zero hunger and making our planet safe for our future generations.

Let us all join hands to work towards achieving the objective of FAO with renewed vigor under the vibrant leadership of the new Director-General.

Thank you.