

**Statement delivered by  
His Excellency Mahdi Sahar Ghailan  
Deputy Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Iraq  
on the occasion of the  
42nd Session of the FAO Conference (14-18 June 2021)  
15 June 2021**

*Distinguished Director-General of FAO,  
Excellencies,  
Heads of Delegations and Representatives of the different countries,  
May God's peace be with you all,*

I am very glad to be able to represent my country's delegation in this 42nd Session of the FAO Conference. I am here to represent the Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Iraq, Mr Muhammad Al-Khafaji, who wishes to convey his greetings to you and wishes this Conference the best of success.

Food security is one of the greatest challenges facing the international community, especially at this time of pandemic, which has been so difficult and which, unfortunately, has been with us for almost two years now. Of course, there are other challenges like the population explosion, climate change, a low productivity and production levels, not to mention the various climate catastrophes that have ravaged our planet recently and the changes affecting the agricultural sectors of our regions throughout the world.

It is absolutely necessary to rise to these challenges in this COVID time, but this means being able to anticipate human requirements and needs in order to be able to face the future. This in turn requires a more effective type of cooperation at all levels – national, regional and international – and this, through the implementation of sustainable development activities and peace-building endeavours, always paying special attention to young people to make sure that they are mainstreamed into the programmes of the Organization, and make sure that they are encouraged to develop their skills, taking into account the needs and priorities of every country, and of course the decisions taken by the Regional Conferences.

In this respect, I am very glad to be able to announce that my country, Iraq, will be organizing the 36th Regional Conference for the Near-East Region – and this in our capital, Baghdad – and the modalities will be coordinated with FAO according to the unfolding health situation.

[Inaudible to the interpreter]

We shall continue to work with FAO and we ask for a greater support of our agricultural support plans and programmes. Of course, during the pandemic, agricultural activities were put on the back burner so to speak, to give priority to the pandemic, but we need to go back to that and reinforce agricultural, animal and plant productivity through the implementation of the strategy devised by the Ministry of Agriculture and development projects, and through the training of stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable agricultural development that will be respectful of the need to preserve the planet and water resources.

Thank you very much.