

Statement delivered by
His Excellency Mmajnun Mammadov
Minister for Agriculture of Azerbaijan
on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
3 July 2023

Distinguished Madame Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to attend the 43rd session of FAO Conference and to have a chance to deliver the speech on this important theme.

Land and water are the vital resources to meet the food demand of growing world population. These resources are limited and subject to decreasing.

Most pressures on the land and water resources comes from agriculture itself. If we refer to the FAO State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture report, we see that, in 2019 the global agricultural land area has decreased by 3 percent, compared with 2000. Against this background, the total primary crops production increased by 53 percent between these years.

Besides that, we will need to produce almost 50 percent more food by 2050 for meeting the nutritional requirements of 10 billion people around the globe. It means the rising human demands put tremendous pressures to the water by pushing its productive limits.

Agriculture is a significant contributor to water stress. Water in agriculture poses a challenge in Azerbaijan as well, due to limited water resources, water loss and lack of efficient water use by farmers. The country's aggregate water resources per capita are relatively low and about 70% of this water supply comes from sources that originate outside Azerbaijan's borders.

Keeping in mind the effective use of our finite water resources, we put strong political willingness to achieve advanced water governance. Responses also include investment in climate-smart agriculture management. In its turn, the Government of Azerbaijan invests a lot into the development of its climate friendly agri-food systems. The main portion of our investment goes to digital and smart agriculture transformation. Our major state support mechanisms also addressed the stimulation of our farmers for application modern irrigation technologies. Moreover, replacement of soil channels with concrete channels, installation of underground water pipes, and promotion of drip and pivot irrigation remains priority in our efficient water governance policy. Azerbaijan is now entering into strategic phase in its new post-conflict recovery period. Now the main goal for the coming years is the rural development and reconstruction of the liberated territories. Those territories also increase our agricultural power by restoring more than one hundred twenty thousand hectares of agricultural lands. Climate friendly and green agriculture development in those territories stays on the top of our evolution agenda. The 'smart cities' and 'smart villages' concepts being implemented in the liberated territories can be shared as one of the best examples contributing to the FAO One Thousand Digital Villages Initiative.

New technologies and digital solutions play significant role in sustainable land and water management. Azerbaijan now actively investing into digitalization of country's agriculture. The recently launched e-

agriculture system allows Azerbaijani farmers to get an easy access to all services with mobility at anytime and anywhere. In our turn, we are ready to share our best practices and know-how in digital agriculture. Taking this opportunity, I wish to thank Mr. Director General for supporting and attending the first FAO International Digital Conference held in Azerbaijan back in May 2022.

Today global climate change scenario puts tremendous challenges to agricultural production. Due to climate change this year, our country also suffered from floods and droughts. Climate mitigation and adaptation measures stands priority in our agro development agenda. The Government of Azerbaijan approaches responsibly to its undertaken obligations within the framework of the Paris agreement and COP 26.

Excellencies,

We are convinced that, the sustainable agri-food system should be achieved via transformation. To this end the fundamental transformation should also be part and parcel of global partnership. There are many international treaties and strategic narratives within the framework of which we are collaborating effectively. However, it is time to change paper strategy into concrete actions, matching the challenges nowadays and stepping together with the requirements of the modern era. The partnership within the frame of the global policies and strategies shall also strive to achieve FAO four betters which anchored to support 2030 SDG Agenda. Hand-in-Hand Initiative, From Farm to Fork Strategy, One Health Initiative and other related strategic narratives are the modern guides for responding the critical drivers affecting agri-food systems. Azerbaijan joins these initiatives with great enthusiasm and ready effectively collaborate within these multilateral platforms. At the end by highly appreciating the great efforts of FAO Director General on global protection of natural resources, I feel confident that, the work of the conference will have substantial impact to global thinking and changes on the ground via agricultural transformation. I wish success to the work of the conference and look forward to fruitful cooperation within the ambits of this outstanding event.

Thank you for your attention.