

CROATIA

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**Statement delivered by Mr. Tugomir Majdak, State Secretary of the Ministry of
Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia**

Dear Mr. Director General,
Dear Chairmen,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Republic of Croatia, and I am pleased to point out that we fully agree with the Joint Statement of the EU and its 27 member states on the Review of the State of Food and Agriculture in the World: Integrated Water Resources Management for food security and climate resilience.

Despite the activities carried out by the United Nations and its member states in the fight against poverty, reducing hunger and promoting the world peace policy, we are aware that we still have a lot to do.

We consider FAO to be an important partner that helps Member States in the transfer of relevant knowledge, guidelines and strategies in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector. We would like to express our gratitude to FAO for publishing various reports over the past two years on trends and challenges related to agriculture and food systems in the world.

In recent years, we have witnessed the growth of inequality, increased food supply insecurity and consequent malnutrition. International food prices have reached record levels with extremely high prices of energy sources, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.

A prerequisite for food security is an agricultural and food system that is sustainable in all its dimensions - economic, environmental and social.

For this reason, Croatia supports multilateral initiatives to find solutions for the current situation in agriculture and food systems, as well as in ensuring the integrated water resources management.

Croatia welcomes the discussion to emphasize the water as a key resource for agriculture and food production. Water, like other natural resources, is of particular interest for the Republic of Croatia and has its special protection prescribed by the Constitution. Integrated water resources management is related to the biophysical and environmental elements such as climate change, environmental pollution, soil and water health, pests and diseases, biodiversity, etc.

We believe that an important role in the water resources management is played by a properly defined agricultural policy, as well as policies aimed at sustainability.

The Republic of Croatia is rich in quality natural resources, water, soil, air and forests, which are the basis for agricultural production and the development of rural areas. In order to fully utilize their potential, it is necessary to preserve and protect them. Therefore, in Croatia we

implement agricultural policy measures, which, among other things, promote good practices in the sustainable management of natural resources.

For example, we encourage a further reduction of using the mineral fertilizers in order to ensure a reduction in groundwater pollution.

Due to its exceptional water wealthiness, Croatia has a good prerequisites for the development of sustainable irrigation. This implies practices that do not cause excessive water pumping and effectively prevent water losses throughout the system.

This goal will be achieved with measures from the Water Area Management Plan until 2027, which is currently under development. By implementing the Water Area Management Plan, we intend to achieve and preserve good water conditions in order to protect human life and health, protect water-dependent ecosystems, and effectively manage flood risks.

Croatia plans to continue encouraging investments in irrigation systems which meet their water needs from alternative sources (e.g. by collecting rainwater in different types of tanks and mini reservoirs). By applying good agricultural practices, farmers contribute to the rational irrigation management, i.e. reducing the crop's need for water. Digitization of agriculture and precision agriculture have additional potential to enhance productivity throughout the entire agricultural and food system.

Improved access to drainage and irrigation systems will be of great importance in mitigating producer climate risks. In this way, the producers will be able to switch from the production of low-value goods to higher-value products more efficiently.

In recent years, Croatia has made a significant contribution to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal number 6 at the legislative, planning, programming and especially project level. We are ready to share our experiences with other countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These days, the Republic of Croatia is celebrating the 10th Anniversary of its membership in the European Union. At the beginning of the year, we became a member of Schengen and euro area, thereby completing the process of European integration. As a future member of the FAO Council, Croatia will continue to propose and provide support for all initiatives to ensure peace and the development of societies based on equality and in which no one will be neglected.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank FAO for its help for many years through expert advices and for connecting countries through regional projects, thus contributing to the creation of conditions for economic growth and a better standard of living for our citizens.

Thank you for your attention.