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**Country statement at the Ministerial Segment on**

**World Food Prices by**

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Mr. Chairperson, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

Being Minister of Agriculture of Sri Lanka, it is indeed a privilege and honour for me to make a statement at this important session, on behalf of the Government and people of Sri Lanka.

Moreover, I wish to convey the well wishes of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse, The President of Sri Lanka and the Government to all and also to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director General for inviting Sri Lanka to this ministerial segment.

Government of Sri Lanka is very affirmative of pressing need to attain food security, through self sufficiency. In this context, Sri Lankan Government has been achieving many successes during these years. We are now self-sufficient in rice, and making arrangements to export the surplus.

We have reaped significant results from the National Campaign, called “Let Us cultivate and Lift up the Nation”, implemented during 2007-2010“ to accelerate the domestic food production, to gradually decrease the importation of certain commodities, such as big onion, chili, maize, green gram and soya bean etc.

Outcomes of this approach became a strength in facing the 2008 world food crisis. Thus, our government continued the programme with a high priority, while executing a complementary home gardening programme, called “Divi Neguma” to increase vegetable production, and make available the produce year round, with an aim to stabilize prices.

The prime objective of the “Divi Naguma” is to fortify people’s economic status, and minimize their dependence on market for food requirement. These programmes were supported, with supply of high yielding seeds, training, technical assistance and credits etc.

Besides, we conduct another Social Protection Programme for Food Security called “Samurdhi” – the Prosperity – in which the poorest of the poor receives a monthly grant, and a part of that to meet the expenses related to their food, as food stamps and the balance goes to their savings account, to make use of their livelihood development whenever necessary.

In view of the Social Protection for Food Security, Sri Lanka implements most common country wide two programmes namely “Mid day Meal for School Children”, which is to feed school children and the “Three Posha (Nutrient) Programme” to feed infants, pregnant and child feeding mothers.

Fertilizer Subsidy Scheme is the major input subsidy under Social Protection for Food Security, that Sri Lanka has been implementing for years, whenever necessary to support farmers to encourage on farming. This scheme not only supports farmers to reduce the cost of production, but also influences to decrease farm gate prices for the benefit of consumers.

Organic Fertilizer Promotion Programme, which was a supplementary to food production, was initiated in 2010, with a view to lessen the chemical fertilizer usage, which is not environmentally friendly and causes unrecoverable damages to the top soil. Results prove the application of compost with chemical fertilizer increases the crop productivity.

This year, my Ministry started two key programmes to attract young generation to agriculture, as youths are not in favour of farming, since it is not profitable and also they believe it is old-style. One programme is meant to develop the agricultural entrepreneurship among young farmers, and makes them become entrepreneurs. Other is to train farmers and youths to

evolve traditional farming to commercial farming, with 50% financial support from the Ministry.

Finally, I place in record that many agencies are with us to assist and support to implement our food security programmes to achieve the desired goals and objectives. I thank the FAO, which is in the forefront of this process in terms of technical assistance.

I thank you.