



STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE,
COMRADE ROBERT GABRIEL MUGABE,**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION (FAO)
HIGH LEVEL SUMMIT ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY
AND THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE
AND BIO-ENERGY: ROME, ITALY,**

3 – 5 JUNE 2008.

Your Excellency, Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister
of the Republic of Italy,

Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United
Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency, Dr. Jacques Diouf, the Food and
Agriculture Organisation Director-General,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Comrades and Friends,

Mr. Prime Minister,

In recognition of the importance of this High Level
Summit, it is befitting to open my address by thanking
the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban
Ki-Moon for inviting me to this Summit and the
Director-General of the Food and Agriculture
Organisation, Dr. Jacques Diouf, through whose efforts
this Summit has been convened. We would, at the same
time, like to express our appreciation for the support

which the thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Conference gave for the convening of this special Summit on the challenges of climate change, food security and bio-energy.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Allow me to also extend our gratitude to the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Biodiversity International as well as the other United Nations agencies and organizations that contributed towards the organization of this Summit. We are also indebted to those national governments that provided direct financial support towards the convening of this Summit.

Mr. Prime Minister, Distinguished Delegates,

Any marked disequilibrium in the world food security equation spells disaster to all that humanity has achieved over the centuries. In this context, the trend towards a

global food crisis that emerged in late 2007 and continued early this year should be a cause for concern to all global leaders and those assigned special tasks for promoting food security at the global level.

Mr. Prime Minister,

The latest trend towards a global food crisis is interlinked with two developments which call for our urgent attention and global responses. These two developments are global warming induced by climate change, and the use of agricultural commodities for the reproduction of bio-fuels. It is therefore paramount that as global leaders we address global warming and bio-fuel production issues in order to find a lasting solution to the quest of global food security.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Southern Africa is one of the regions estimated to be most at risk from the effects of climate change, despite

the fact that the continent as a whole accounts for 5 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions responsible for global warming. Over the past ten years, the frequency and severity of droughts and floods in the sub-region have increased as a result of climate change.

These extreme weather conditions are exacerbating poverty levels, leaving many farmers trapped in a cycle of indigence and vulnerability, thus derailing the region's drive towards attaining goals set forth in the Millennium Development Goals and the World Food Summit.

Mr. Prime Minister,

The challenges emanating from climate change have been further compounded by the decline in cereal stocks that has seen dramatic rises in prices of food. On the other hand, soaring oil prices in the past two years have resulted in increased prices of oil related agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and agro-chemicals. This state of affairs will mostly affect developing countries, which

are net food importers with a high risk of failing to achieve food security for their citizens. The impact of climate change on agricultural production comes against a backdrop of numerous challenges already affecting agriculture in Southern Africa such as the AIDS pandemic and declining soil fertility.

Mr. Prime Minister,

My country's primary agriculture policy objective remains that of ensuring national and household food security through our own production. In this regard, Zimbabwe has recognised the importance and centrality of land in agricultural production and food security. Thus, over the past decade, Zimbabwe has democratized the land ownership patterns in the country, with over 300 000 previously landless families now proud landowners.

Previously, this land was owned by a mere 4 000 farmers, mainly of British stock. While this land reform

programmed has been warmly welcomed by the vast majority of our people, it has however, and regrettably so, elicited wrath from our former colonial masters. In retaliation for the measures we took to empower the black majority, the United Kingdom has mobilized her friends and allies in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand to impose illegal economic sanctions against Zimbabwe. They have cut off all development assistance, disabled lines of credit, prevented the Bretton Woods institutions from providing financial assistance and ordered private companies in the United States not to do business with Zimbabwe. All this has been done to cripple Zimbabwe's economy and thereby effect illegal regime change in our country.

Funds are being channelled through non-governmental organizations to Opposition political parties, which are a creation of the West. Further, these Western funded NGOs also use food as a political weapon with which to campaign against Government, especially in the rural areas.

Mr. Prime Minister,

These constraints to agricultural performance have not deterred us from taking measures designed to increase agricultural productivity in our country. To address capacity constraints, my Government, under its agricultural reform programme, has prioritized the development of irrigated agriculture. To buttress irrigated agriculture, my Government has embarked on a programme to harness improved water supplies through building small and medium sized dams in all districts of the country. Further, every effort is being made to ensure that critical agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, are made available to boost agricultural production.

Mr. Prime Minister,

To cushion farmers from the rising cost of agricultural inputs, my Government has put in place supportive

programmes, which include the Crop and Livestock Input Credit Scheme and the Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility (ASPEF) which extend loans to farmers, for working capital and equipment at concessionary interest rates. Related to these support programmes, Government has also embarked on a Farm Mechanization Programme, targeting both the small-holder and commercial sectors. All these support facilities for the farmers are aimed at addressing the issue of productivity and food security at both the household and national levels.

Mr. Prime Minister,

My Government embarked on the development of its bio-energy sector in 2004. It is gratifying to note that Zimbabwe's bio-energy sector draws its feed stock primarily from a non-food crop, the Jatropha plant. The choice of Jatropha is a deliberate government policy to avoid competition between our food needs and fuel security needs. The use of Jatropha seeds as feed stock

in the bio-diesel programme is set to benefit our farmers as it widens their income base through an expanded market for the Jatropha seed.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Challenges faced by developing countries need to be addressed through increased investment in agriculture from both domestic and international development partners. Organisations such as FAO must continue to provide technical expertise in areas such as bio-energy policies in order to allow for a balance between food and fuel security at both national and global levels. Parallel to these capacity boosting initiatives, there is need to demonstrate political commitment to the Doha Round negotiations that should deliver a sustainable reform of the global trade policies in agricultural commodities.

Mr. Prime Minister,

In conclusion, I wish to restate that this Summit needs to formulate robust action plans that recognize the need for fair trade policies in order to contribute towards the growth potential of the agriculture sector in the developing world. In addition, we need to underline the importance of giving our people better access to their natural resources, especially land, so that they are able to help in addressing the question of global food security.

I thank you.

RGM/mm