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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-fourth Session

Nadi, Fiji, 9-13 April 2018

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

1. Regrettably, it was not possible for me to travel to Fiji to participate in the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. I am grateful, however, for the opportunity to forward my statement, for the first time in my role as Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, to the meeting. Before sharing some thoughts on the issues that both the Council and this Regional Conference will focus on, please allow me to convey my appreciation to the Government and the people of Fiji for kindly hosting this Regional Conference.

2. The Regional Conferences are now an integral and important component of FAO's governance structure as they provide the imperative regional perspectives into the programme of work of the Organization. Indeed, one of the important tasks of this 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific will be priority setting at the regional level, focussing on the "Organizational Outcomes", which define the results of FAO's work. The priorities expressed by this session will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the Organization's Programme of Work and Budget for the next biennium.

3. I expect that after fruitful deliberations over the course of this week, Members of the Asia and the Pacific region will provide specific recommendations to the FAO Council and Conference in the final report of this session. I am sure that in doing so, Members will also take into account the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, which are core to the work of the Organization. SDGs 1 and 2 are particularly central to achieving the overall agenda for sustainable development. FAO, with its expertise and technical knowledge, is undoubtedly well positioned to support countries in this region to achieve these goals.

4. Indeed, fourteen of the seventeen SDGs are related to FAO's work, and close alignment between SDGs and the FAO Strategic Objectives confirms the considerable potential for FAO to contribute substantially to the implementation of the new global development framework. However, it is clear that, without greater progress in reducing and eliminating hunger and malnutrition by 2030, the full range of SDGs will not be achieved. It is encouraging to note that the decentralized offices will play a key role in supporting countries in the implementation of SDGs.

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5. At its 158th Session in December 2017, the FAO Council encouraged continuation of the strong Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) collaboration in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly at the country level.
6. The data contained in the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) Report in 2017 informs, however, that hunger is on the rise. SOFI estimates that 815 million people suffered from hunger in 2016, and this represents an increase of 38 million people compared to 2015, when the number was 777 million. Owing in part to the size of its population, the highest number of undernourished people is in Asia. FAO estimates that in 2016 almost 490 million people in Asia and Pacific did not have access to sufficient food energy.
7. The drivers and impacts of migration are intrinsically linked to FAO's global goals of fighting hunger and achieving food security, reducing rural poverty and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. At its 158th Session in December 2017, the FAO Council expressed its appreciation that the Organization will Co-Chair the Global Migration Group (GMG) in 2018, together with the International Organization for Migration. This year is going to be important for the future of migration, as UN Member States will adopt the Global Compact for Safe, orderly and regular migration as well as the Global Compact on Responsibility Sharing for Refugees. During this Session, you will have the opportunity to provide guidance, from the regional perspective, on GMG priorities for Asia and the Pacific.
8. It should also be highlighted that the 158th Session of the FAO Council acknowledged that the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, as deliberated at the COP23, sets the agriculture and food security agenda for the UNFCCC process and encouraged FAO's efforts in that regard. In this regard, appreciation should be conveyed to the Government of Fiji for the excellent work during their Presidency of COP23 and for the results achieved during the Conference.
9. Finally, I should like to encourage this meeting to bear in mind that as a Governing Body of the Organization, this 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific has a unique and crucial role to play in defining FAO policies. I trust that the Report you will submit to the 159th Session of the Council in June this year with regard to programme and budgetary matters, and to the 41st Session of the FAO Conference in June 2019 with regard to policy and regulatory matters, will clearly spell out the regional views you would like the Organization to act on in the coming biennium.
10. I would like to wish the Chairperson and the delegates to this Regional Conference fruitful deliberations.