

Distinguished delegates from 46 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, FAO representatives, Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to the 37th session of the Senior Officer Meeting of FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific on behalf of the host country Sri Lanka. It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to extend a warm welcome to each one of you, join virtually, first-ever standalone senior officer meeting, as we come together to discuss critical issues related to food security in the region.

As a host country we are humbled to be a part of this gathering, recognizing the significance of collaboration and collective efforts in addressing the challenges that our region faces. In a world that has become increasingly interconnected, the challenges we face are complex and demand collaborative solutions. Today, we unite virtually, transcending borders and time zones, to engage in discussions that hold the key to shaping a more sustainable and resilient future for our region.

As we embark on this journey together, the theme of our discussions—food security, agrifood system transformation, and the noble goal of ending hunger—resonates deeply with the pressing needs of our time. The Asia-Pacific region, with its diverse landscapes and cultures, presents both challenges and opportunities that require innovative, inclusive, and sustainable solutions.

The FAO representatives among us bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise, serving as beacons of guidance in our shared mission. Their commitment to promoting food security, sustainable agrifood systems, and the vision of a hunger-free world is a source of inspiration for us all.

Our discussions over the next few days will delve into crucial aspects, from enhancing regional food security. The goal is not merely to produce more, but to

do so in a manner that respects the environment, empowers local communities, and ensures the well-being of present and future generations.

The challenges we face are multifaceted, but so too are the opportunities. Let us seize this moment to exchange ideas, share best practices, and forge partnerships that will pave the way for transformative change. Each of you brings a unique perspective and expertise to this virtual table, and it is through our collaboration that we can turn challenges into opportunities and aspirations into realities.

Once again, on behalf of the host country and the entire organizing committee, I extend a warm welcome to each one of you. May our discussions be fruitful, our partnerships enduring, and our commitment unwavering in the pursuit of a hunger-free Asia-Pacific region. Thank you.