



联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

Organisation des Nations  
Unies pour l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная организация  
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
Naciones Unidas para la  
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
الغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

## Thirty-first Session

**Voronezh, Russian Federation, 16–18 May 2018**

## Statement by the Director-General

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is an honor and great pleasure to be with you for this 31st (Thirty-first) Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe.
2. Let me start by thanking the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, as well as the Governorate of Voronezh, for their hospitality and warm welcome.
3. This Regional Conference is very important to further align FAO's work to the needs and priorities of European and Central Asian countries in light of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. FAO's highest objective is to support Member States in achieving the SDG 2 on ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and promoting sustainable agricultural development.
5. Unfortunately, as you know, hunger increased in the world in 2016, after more than 10 years of decline.
6. And preliminary data indicate that there has also been a further increase in the prevalence of undernourishment in the world in 2017.
7. So in the last two years, we have had a rise in the number of people facing hunger in the world.
8. Conflicts and climate change continue to be the main reasons for the deterioration of global food security, especially in Africa and the Near East.
9. Most of the affected people live in rural areas.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;  
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.  
Other documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

MW403



ERC31

10. Their livelihoods as family farmers, pastoralists, and fishermen have been disrupted by the consequences of conflict and the impacts of climate change, especially droughts that are becoming more intense and severe.
11. To deal with this situation, it is fundamental to build and reinforce the resilience of rural people.
12. We have to work to keep local food systems functioning even under conflict situations.
13. To save lives, we have to also save their livelihoods. And I count on the generosity of donor countries to continue supporting FAO's activities towards saving the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable communities in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. Europe and Central Asia region has made substantial progress in reducing undernourishment over the last years.
15. But in some countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia hunger is still a major concern.
16. Most of these people live in rural areas. Poverty and the impacts of climate change are the main challenges to defeating hunger in this region.
17. In this regard, it will be very important to receive your feedback on the implementation of two specific Regional Initiatives: one on empowering smallholders and family farmers for poverty reduction and another on sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate.
18. But let me highlight that hunger must not be our only concern. In fact, the SDG 2 calls for the eradication of all forms of malnutrition.
19. Nowadays, many countries in this region face the triple burden of malnutrition.
20. The existence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overnutrition at the same time.
21. Regarding overweight and obesity, we are seeing today a global epidemic.
22. The numbers are growing in most developing and developed countries alike.
23. In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults in the world were overweight. Of these, over 650 million were obese.
24. Here in this region, the level of obesity in some countries like Malta, Turkey and the United Kingdom reaches about 29% of the population.
25. The overconsumption of processed foods high in salt and sugars is the major driver behind this increase in overweight and obesity.
26. Countries need to tackle this situation by stimulating healthy diets.
27. National public policies are fundamental. Nutrition should be a public issue, a State responsibility.
28. Consumers must be aware of the benefits and detriments of what they are eating.
29. This involves nutrition education, awareness raising, as well as regulations on labelling and advertisements.
30. Agrifood trade and market integration will also remain important challenges in the coming years in this region.

31. This includes the further strengthening of value chains and institutional frameworks for food safety and animal health.

32. We will have the opportunity to further explore all issues related to SDG 2, including food loss and waste, during the side-event on Zero Hunger that will take place today at lunchtime. I invite all of you to participate.

Excellencies,

33. As I mentioned before, climate change is one of the major obstacles in achieving sustainable development.

34. It is of utmost importance to promote the adaptation of food systems, especially in relation to poor rural communities.

35. We expect to hear from you on how FAO can best help your countries in planning and implementing actions, as well as in mobilizing financial support to build resilience of rural livelihoods.

36. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is one of the most important mechanisms now available to finance developing countries to respond to climate change.

37. FAO is working closely with a wide range of countries around the world that have formally requested the Organization's assistance to prepare projects to be submitted to the Green Climate Fund,.

38. Here in Europe and Central Asia, these countries include Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova and Turkmenistan.

39. Let me also highlight that FAO is committed to exploring all approaches to put forward food systems that can provide accessible and healthy food for all while respecting the environment and biodiversity.

40. In end of this month of May, also at FAO Headquarters in Rome, we will hold the first Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors.

41. And in the second semester, FAO will organize an International Symposium on Innovation for Smallholder and Family farmers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

42. To conclude, let me reiterate that persistent malnutrition and rural poverty in Europe and Central Asia call for still greater efforts if we are to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.

43. Millions of people are relying on us.

44. FAO and partners must rise to this challenge.

45. We cannot achieve this task alone.

46. FAO will continue to support Europe and Central Asia in the quest for inclusive growth and shared prosperity, with the role of family farmers at the heart of our interventions.

47. Freeing the world from hunger and extreme poverty is our shared objective, and no one must be left behind.

Thank you very much for your attention.