

175th Session of the FAO Council

Sub-Item 8.1: Report of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (Rabat, Morocco, Senior Officers Meeting 26-28 March 2024 and Ministerial Session 18-20 April 2024)

The 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) was organized in two segments. The Senior Officers Meeting (SOM), convened in virtual modality from 26 to 28 March 2024, was attended by 285 delegates from 51 Members, including two Ministers, two Deputy Ministers, 30 Ambassadors, three private sector organizations, four civil society and/or non-governmental organizations, nine intergovernmental organizations, 12 research organizations, three United Nations (UN) organizations, and three observer nations. The Meeting was opened with addresses by Mr Mohamed Sadiki, Minister for Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco and Mr Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa.

The Ministerial Session, conducted in hybrid modality from 18 to 20 April 2024, was attended by 241 delegates from 51 Members, including one Head of Government; 45 Ministers; five Deputy Ministers; 32 Ambassadors; five observer nations; Representatives of five UN organizations; ten intergovernmental organizations; five civil society organizations; five private sector associations; and five scientific and academic organizations. The inaugural ceremony of the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa was held on 18 April 2024 in the presence of His Excellency Aziz Akhannouch, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco and Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of FAO.

Members reviewed **FAO's performance in the Africa region during 2022-23**, acknowledging FAO's contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the promotion of efficient, inclusive, and sustainable agrifood systems.

On *Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31*, Members reaffirmed the four priorities agreed upon at the 32nd Regional Conference, and requested FAO refine business models and scale up initiatives like the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, One Country One Priority Product Initiative and 1000 Digital Village Initiatives.

On **leveraging science and innovation for enhanced agricultural productivity and competitiveness within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, Members acknowledged the pivotal role of science and innovation in agrifood systems transformation and encouraged to augment funding for agricultural research and development, particularly in areas like climate-smart agriculture and precision farming. They advocated for creating collaborative spaces where stakeholders could jointly address challenges and share knowledge and technology across borders.

On *Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security*, Members welcomed the promotion of native African foods for enhanced nutrition, health, and food security, emphasizing the benefits across nutritional, environmental, sociocultural, and economic dimensions; and also welcomed the guiding principles to boost both supply and demand for native crops and Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) through production, investment, and consumer education.

Regarding **combating food loss and waste**, recognized its multifaceted impact on social, environmental, and economic fronts. Appreciating identified approaches for reduction, the Regional Conference urged Members to integrate food loss and waste reduction into national and regional policies, emphasizing its significance for achieving sustainable agrifood systems and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Investment in infrastructure, collaboration with the private sector, and a holistic approach to food security were emphasized.

Morocco, the host country, shared its experience towards agrifood systems transformation through, for example, blue economy, research, and irrigation development.

Members shared experiences in their implementation of the *four betters* in their respective countries, as well as with the implementation of the FAO Corporate Initiatives: Hand-in-Hand Initiative, One Country One Priority Product Initiative, 1000 Digital Villages Initiative and the Green Cities Initiative.

Members advised FAO to make the FAO Country Offices more agile, efficient and effective to address evolving Members' needs in line with the proposals outlined in the FAO Country Office Network document submitted to the Regional Conference.

Members agreed to hold the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 2026. The exact date will be agreed jointly by the selected host country and the Secretariat of the Regional Conference.

His Excellency Mr Mohamed Sadiki

Chairperson of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa

Minister for Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco