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Statement by the Spokesperson of the Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger

1. On behalf of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger (PFH) of Latin America and the Caribbean, I would like to extend a warm greeting and recognition to all those present, because we know that each and every one of you has a great commitment to a Zero Hunger world.
2. My congratulations to FAO's highest authority in Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Julio Berdegú, to the Government of Ecuador and to all the ministers and authorities of the countries of the region who make this conference possible. This meeting, of course, is the result of hard work and commitment, which will become the main engine to move forward in unity toward the effective fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda in terms of food, agriculture and equality.
3. Precisely in this challenge the parliaments cannot be left behind. In that sense, as general coordinator of the Front, a network that today has more than 400 legislators committed to better food and better agriculture for all, I would like to state that it is an honor for me to be part of this body, giving a voice to the 21 national parliaments and 4 regional parliaments that make up our great parliamentary platform.
4. As has been mentioned repeatedly, hunger and malnutrition figures are currently skyrocketing, and our region is in extreme danger of returning to the levels of two decades ago.
5. It is truly a tragedy that today nearly 60 million people suffer from hunger in the region. We cannot allow food insecurity to affect 267 million people and 106 million adults, mostly women, to be obese. Likewise, what happens in children is very alarming. As an example, in 2020, in my country, Guatemala, one of the worst affected by food insecurity in the region, 1 in 2 children under the age of five suffers from chronic malnutrition. This is a very tough figure, one of the worst in the world. This catastrophe rarely appears in the international media, which shows us that if we do not overcome it, redoubling political and technical efforts, the path to regional sustainable development will slip further and further away.
6. I am convinced that many of the solutions are related to political will, and I believe that we, in parliaments, can contribute to changing this landscape.
7. Although most of the countries in the region are presidential, the parliaments are increasingly playing a leading role in placing SDG2 Zero Hunger on public agendas.
8. For 10 years, hundreds of legislators from Latin America and the Caribbean from different political parties have been publicly championing – in coordination with executives, academia and civil society – the importance of recognizing the right to adequate food, both in the Constitutions and in the legal bodies, thanks to the technical support of FAO (from its world headquarters, its regional and national offices), the Spanish Cooperation and the Mexican Cooperation.

Documents may be consulted at: www.fao.org.

9. During the pandemic alone, the Front has pushed through dozens of laws to create more sustainable, healthy and inclusive food systems. We greatly appreciate the fact that the document of the Regional Conference, within the framework of Regional Initiative No. 1, explicitly commits to the continuity of support with technical assistance to the PFH to continue promoting policies, legislation, regulations and other instruments.

10. But generating more legislation is certainly not enough. We must strengthen our responsibility for oversight and the ability to improve budgets so that laws do not remain on paper and can be made concrete in reality. For this, it is very necessary, as I have said, to work in close coordination with executives, academia, civil society, and, of course, hand in hand with our partners in international cooperation, in particular, as I have mentioned, with Spanish cooperation, through the Project to Support the Hunger-Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative, and Mexican cooperation, through the Mesoamerica Without Hunger Programme.

11. Another very important challenge we have is to mainstream the gender approach in all the policies we promote, in addition to enhancing and making visible the leadership of women parliamentarians who day by day defend the human right to food from their seats and from territorial work. For us this is a priority. There is an urgent need for new and better laws, budgets and policies based on the conviction that Gender Equality is a prerequisite for a world with Zero Hunger.

12. We decisively join in the thrust of the 3 cross-cutting themes proposed in the document of this conference: gender, youth and inclusion; committing to actively incorporate them into all the laws and policies that we continue to promote.

13. At the same time, we stress the special importance for the parliamentary world of the 4 accelerators that have been proposed for this new work cycle, in particular the complements of governance, human capital and institutions, because without adequate governance that promotes a just realization of the right to food and the development of countries, technological change may end up increasing gaps and inequalities between people. Achieving that governance and institutional strength is a responsibility that we cannot shirk as parliamentarians, and in which we will continue to work actively from our legislative position.

14. In addition, climate change is a persistent threat. We must mitigate its effects, adapt and move toward more sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems. It is precisely rural women who have the highest degrees of vulnerability to environmental degradation.

15. The 21 countries that are part of the Front, in addition to the regional parliaments, meet annually in a face-to-face forum, the tenth version of which is scheduled for November of this year. It is our great parliamentary space for the exchange of experiences, decision-making and political positions in favor of the 2030 Agenda.

16. In this Forum, as in our regional and national work plans, we will work to follow up on the FAO Strategic Framework for 2022-2031, adopted in 2021 during the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference, seeking to support the 2030 Agenda by transforming toward more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.

17. In this regard, I thank the countries that approved this strategic framework and included in it, for the first time, the Parliamentary Fronts and Parliamentary Alliances as key associations to meet the proposed goals.

18. In 2021 we made a concrete proposal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations based on our experience of legislative work over a decade. In many cases the work is carried out hand in hand and in a collaborative way with executives, academia and civil society.

19. It should be noted that we have always worked on these lines of action from the Fronts, as reflected in our national and regional work plans, it being important to point out that in the coming years we will work toward merging our work plans to incorporate the 4 betters proposed by FAO, ensuring in the laws and policies of our countries *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*.

20. In that regard, in the last biennium and since the beginning of the pandemic, we have contributed toward achieving significant results in these four areas, as well as in the various recommendations for the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean. Relative to these recommendations, I will mention some examples of the more than 40 laws that we have promoted, as follows:

A. Challenges and opportunities related to better nutrition, ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition in all its forms, in particular, by promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets

21. We have supported measures and investments aimed at creating sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems, with a focus on increasing the food supply and physical access to healthy diets, as well as facilitating economic access, information and consumption habits to achieve more nutritious diets; this is done through such actions as the food labeling law of Colombia and Argentina of 2021, the School Feeding Law of Ecuador of 2020, the Law that approves the modification of the general health law on food labeling of Mexico of 2020, the Normative Framework to guarantee food safety in the Andean Region of 2020, Law to ensure access to the goods of the basic basket in the context of the health emergency caused by COVID of Costa Rica of 2020, the Law that establishes the special regime for the donation of food of Paraguay of 2020, the Normative framework on food innocuity of PARLANDINO, and the Law that increases the budget for the 2021 School feeding programme of Guatemala. In this area, I would also like to highlight the Model Law for the prevention and reduction of food losses and wastes, recently approved by the 36th Ordinary Assembly of PARLATINO on February 12, 2022.

B. Challenges and opportunities related to better production at the local, regional and global levels, ensuring the resilience and sustainability of agri-food systems

22. We have promoted economic growth and sustainable and resilient production accompanied by social inclusion policies to eradicate extreme poverty and end hunger in disadvantaged territories, with an emphasis on productive processes and economic inclusion and the creation of new opportunities in rural territories; this is done through such actions as the Law establishing mechanisms to promote the participation of local smallholders and peasant, community-level family farming in Colombia in 2020, the Aquaculture and Fisheries Law of Ecuador of 2020, the Federal Law for the Promotion and Protection of Native Maize in Mexico in 2020, the Law to ensure access to the goods of the basic basket in the context of the health emergency caused by COVID-19 of Honduras of 2020, the Law of Differentiated Agrarian Credit of Paraguay of 2020; the Normative Framework to promote and strengthen the peasant economy and family agriculture in the Andean region of 2020 and the Family Farming Law of El Salvador of 2021.

C. Challenges and opportunities related to a better environment. To protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and to combat climate change

23. We have contributed toward improving the sustainability and resilience to crises of agri-food systems, as well as producers, communities and lands; this, for example, through two model laws of PARLATINO: the Model Law on Water and Sanitation of 2021 and the Model Law on Climate Change and Food Security of 2022.

D. Challenges and opportunities related to a better life, promoting inclusive economic growth, including by reducing inequalities (between urban and rural areas, rich and poor countries, men and women)

24. As you know, we will not achieve SDG2 if we do not work on gender equality. Today the conditions of women are increasingly affected as a result of the pandemic, and that is why we are working from the Parliaments to increase support for programmes that promote the economic empowerment of rural women, since it is essential for post-pandemic reconstruction with equality.

25. For example, in Honduras, we have been promoting, in close coordination with civil society, norms that directly improve the conditions of rural women, such as the Credimujer Law of 2018 promoted by the Coordination of the Parliamentary Front of Honduras, which creates the National Solidarity Credit Programme for Rural Women. This programme gives priority to the financing of rural women who live in the most vulnerable communities of the country and seeks to promote among this population activities aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises of agricultural production, aquaculture, agriculture, livestock, transformation of services and formal and informal trade.

26. At present we have worked on gender mainstreaming in many laws. As in the Climate Change Law of PARLANDINO or the Family Farming Law of PARLANDINO, initiatives that hope to serve as inspiration and support for regulations on this subject throughout the region.

27. Also, along this line we have promoted Parliamentary Fronts and Alliances as pluralistic platforms against hunger and malnutrition in national and regional parliaments around the globe, for example the European Parliament Alliance and the Pan-African Parliament Alliance. An example of this is the First World Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition held in the Senate of Spain in 2018.

28. Although the Front has made great normative progress, we are convinced that with your support we must redouble our efforts to reduce the impacts of the pandemic and build together a zero-hunger region with gender equality.

29. For this, it is essential that each country strengthen parliamentary alliances against hunger and malnutrition and include in their actions gender equality as a crucial factor to carry out the transformation of our agri-food systems and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

30. Given this sense of urgency, those of us at the Parliaments must put ourselves at the head of this task, which is why in this year, 2022, we will take the political commitment against hunger and malnutrition to the highest level, that is, to the Presidencies of the parliaments, and for this we will implement a great **Ibero-American and Caribbean Parliamentary Pact for Zero Hunger with Gender Equality** as a unique initiative in the world to contribute directly to the 2030 Agenda, especially to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 16 and 17.

31. This Parliamentary Pact seeks to strengthen the work of national and regional parliaments in the field of food and nutrition security, ensuring permanent legislative work in relation to the generation of new laws or improvements in laws and budgets, and the positioning on the public agenda of priority issues for the achievement of the SDG 2 with a gender focus, always in collaboration with executives, academia, civil society, private enterprise and other relevant actors for the construction of this Pact.

32. It should be noted that this Iberian-American and Caribbean milestone is part of the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative, based on the joint work between the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, PARLATINO and the Spanish Parliamentary Alliance for the Right to Food of the General Courts of Spain.

33. Finally, I would like to inform you that the Parliaments adhere to the lines of action presented here and put the Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean at the disposal of the Ministries of Agriculture and other related entities. I would also like from this moment to make ourselves available to the Chairman of the Committee on Food Security, Gabriel Ferrero, to jointly promote this shared agenda proposed today by FAO, always hand in hand with the FAO

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, with the invaluable support of its Regional Director, Mr. Julio Berdegué.

34. Our goal is to continue working in collaboration with the executive branches of governments and hand in hand with our main partners such as FAO, Spanish Cooperation, Mexican Cooperation, the Right to Food Watch and the various Civil Society Organizations, which I take the opportunity to thank once again for all their support.

35. This will allow us to follow up on the commitments made at this conference and continue to strengthen our work to position SDG2 and SDG5 at the top of the public agendas of our countries, so as not to leave anyone behind.