

**36th Session of FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
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Bangladesh response -Agenda Item 11: Prioritization of Country and Regional needs
Thursday 10 March 2022, 14:00 – 18:00 hours

Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque MP, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh
& the Chairperson of the session

[Name, Position, Country], and [Name, Position, Country], Vice Chairpersons

Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO

Excellencies, Hon'ble Ministers, Heads of Delegations from Member Countries

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Afternoon

On behalf of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, I extend my heartiest greetings to all of you. The government and the people of Bangladesh feel very honoured to host the 36th APRC.

I am pleased to share with you our country's perspectives and priorities for the transformation agri-food system to make it nutrition-sensitive, resilient, and sustainable, and to help accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Distinguished delegates,

Bangladesh is among the fastest growing economies globally. Our GDP grew at an average rate of 7.4% per year from 2015 to 2019, reaching a record of 8.15% in 2018-19. Even with the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, the country managed positive GDP growth of 3.5% in 2019-20 with the injection of a sizeable stimulus package. The current 8th Five Year Plan 2020-25 prioritizes recovery from the pandemic and acceleration of growth. We are on track to graduate from the LDC category to developing country in 2026. Economic growth has been accompanied with progress in food and nutrition security indicators, despite the challenges of COVID-19. Agriculture has offered tremendous resilience and played very crucial role in reduction of poverty and food insecurity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have made good progress in addressing undernutrition over the last two decades; it is, however, feared that there may be a dent due to the impact of COVID-19. Micronutrient deficiency persists, and over-nutrition and increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases are emerging challenges. We see diversification of both production and consumption and widespread nutrition awareness as priorities. We also pursue doubling agricultural productivity and income, reducing food loss and waste, and expanding mechanization, modernization and improved agri-food value chains in line with the National Agriculture Policy 2018, National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 and Bangladesh Perspective Plan 2021-2041. The

goal is to sustainably produce safe, healthy, and nutritious food for domestic as well as export market.

We foresee that the existing institutional and governance framework has to be strengthened in order to realize these priorities for agri-food system transformation. We understand that APCR member countries would also appreciate such transformation towards more robust food and nutrition security.

In this process, we have a number of common problems apart from the ongoing covid pandemic. One such problem is climate change. While contributing less than 0.47 % of global emissions, Bangladesh is one of the most climate vulnerable countries. Our Honourable Prime Minister, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, is currently the chair of the 55-nation Climate Vulnerable Forum that includes many other countries from the Asia-Pacific region. Among other initiatives, we are finalizing the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan to focus on promoting strategies for climate resilience.

Like other member states from this region, we developed a National Pathway document for the transformation of food systems during the UN Food Systems Summit, prioritizing actions to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. We acknowledge that transformational change will only be achieved if the private sector, women, and youth, contribute.

Distinguished delegates,

Solving common problems do require common resolution. The coronavirus pandemic has brought home to us the interconnectedness of the world. We need renewed commitments for greater cooperation, collaboration, partnerships, knowledge sharing, and of course technical as well as funding support to address climate change impacts in most vulnerable countries of the region. Our Honourable Prime Minister emphasized these points at both the UN Food Systems Summit and COP26 last year.

Mr. Chairman / Madam Chair

The Government of Bangladesh greatly appreciates and values the work of FAO in this process. We look forward to working with FAO, and other member states in the region, as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and reinvigorate our efforts to realize our aspirations for sustainable development, leaving no one behind.

It is symbolic for us that the APCR is happening now in Dhaka, in March, when we are bringing to a culmination the year-long celebrations of the golden jubilee of our independence as well as the birth centenary of the Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We continue to build on his vision and are committed to accelerating change and building Better Production, Better Nutrition and a Better Environment, to ensure a Better Life for all our people.

I thank you all.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.