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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## Thirty-seventh Session

Quito, Ecuador, 28 March - 1 April 2022

### Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

*FAO Director-General QU Dongyu,*

*Honourable Ministers,*

*Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It is my pleasure to address all of you today.
2. I thank the Government and people of the Republic of Ecuador for hosting us in this beautiful city of Quito. Special thanks to the Honourable Minister Rubén Flores for our gracious host.
3. As I start, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the FAO Director-General QU Dongyu for inviting the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to this FAO Regional Conference as he has done for the other Regional Conferences.
4. Director-General, I take this opportunity to once again assure you of our full commitment to working towards the goal we share with FAO and with the entire UN system, of a world free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty – hand in hand for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*.

*Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen,*

5. We meet just over two years since the COVID-19 pandemic started. While it has devastated lives and worsened hunger and malnutrition – with up to an additional estimated 161 million people suffering from hunger – the fact that we are meeting here in person in Quito highlights the slow but steady progress we are making to deal with the pandemic.
6. Regrettably, when we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel of the pandemic, we are now concerned about the potential impact of the tragic armed conflict in Ukraine on increased food insecurity globally when millions of people were already facing famine or the immediate risk of famine or are experiencing severe food insecurity in several regions of the world – especially in Asia. This conflict is not just one more conflict on top of those that tragically and protractedly affect several countries in the world. All are regrettable and evitable. Yet the one in Ukraine will have systemic

Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org).

impact on food availability, access, utilization and stability. It will hit those poorest and most vulnerable across the globe. We need to do all in our hands to minimize the impact on hunger and undernutrition. We need to do all in our hands to secure smallholder and family farmers' next harvests and to speed up the transition of our agrifood systems to become more resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

7. Honourable Ministers, I commend the leadership that you and your countries have provided in dealing with COVID-19 and its impacts on the region's agrifood systems. I rest assured that you will exercise equally the leadership that the response to the impacts of this conflict on food security will require.

*Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

8. The Committee on World Food Security was established in 1974, and reformed in 2009, to serve as the intergovernmental body where governments and all the different stakeholders would gather to face the severe food crises of the time, and the long-term challenges to achieve food security and nutrition for all. The CFS is a space designed to coordinate our policies and agree on difficult issues.

9. Today, 133 Member Nations of the UN are Members of the Committee (including most of your countries) who work together with civil society, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, farmer organizations, philanthropic organizations, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), international financial institutions (IFIs), the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the United Nations development system (UNDS) – notably, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), and UN Nutrition – to address complex food security and nutrition issues, achieved through sustainable and inclusive food systems.

10. Since 2009, our governments have agreed at the CFS on global policy frameworks which are the cornerstones of well-functioning agrifood systems and to the response to crises. These include the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security; the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI); the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA); and policy recommendations on climate change, water, and connecting smallholders to markets and much more. Last year, we agreed at the Committee on the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and on Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other Innovative Approaches.

11. I am pleased that this Regional Conference is focusing on the *four betters* that are at the heart of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. I will take the next few minutes to share with you examples of how you can utilize some of the CFS policy guidelines as tools and resources for innovations towards the achievement of the *four betters* in your countries.

**First, better production:**

12. Small-scale family farming and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are responsible for about 80 percent of the food we eat globally.

13. Family farmers are the cornerstone of rural prosperity, of more resilient value chains and, usually, of sustainable management of natural resources and territories. They are the basic cell of inclusive and equitable agrifood systems capable of providing healthy food, while reducing poverty across the rural-urban continuum. Together with ensuring decent work across value chains, they are key to achieving SDGs 1, No Poverty, and 2, Zero Hunger, simultaneously. Through empowering

rural women, the impact would multiply, and then we have a greater chance of achieving SDG 5, Gender Equality.

14. This is why it is crucial to ensure that smallholder and family farmers are at the center of the global response to the current crisis.

15. To enhance their productivity and participation in value chains and access to markets, the CFS endorsed the Principles of Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems in 2014 as well as the CFS policy recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets endorsed in 2016, which are very useful tools.

### **Second, *better nutrition:***

16. In February 2021, CFS endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition that aim to support countries to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by utilizing a food systems lens.

17. The guidelines include a wide range of recommendations aimed at reducing policy fragmentation between relevant sectors, with special emphasis on food, agriculture and nutrition, while also addressing social, economic and environmental sustainability.

### **Third, *better environment:***

18. The CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other Innovative Approaches endorsed in June 2021 provide guidance to countries and stakeholders in strengthening agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition.

19. The recommendations underline the importance of improving the sustainability of agriculture and food systems, and the need to reduce their pressure on natural resources and their negative environmental impacts, including in relation to climate change, biodiversity, water and land.

### **Fourth and last, *better life:***

20. All our efforts will, unfortunately, be moot unless they respect the rights, and improve the lives, of food workers, smallholder farmers, youth, women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

21. To this end, CFS is currently working to negotiate guidance on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment and on Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems. I encourage you to engage actively with this ongoing work to ensure your regional and national priorities are addressed.

### *Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

22. If we are to succeed in achieving the SDGs, taking action on these *four betters* is not enough *per se*.

23. The integrated nature of the SDGs requires the integration of policies in different areas, as well as private and public investments, across line ministries and institutions, and from local to national levels.

24. In the agrifood area we are very lucky. Land, soil, farms, landscapes and territories, food and diets are natural "integrators". Sustainable solutions deliver simultaneously on almost all of the SDGs.

25. This is what the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit has successfully promoted - a “Food Systems” approach, which urges us to refrain from looking at issues in isolation: land tenure, soils, biodiversity, climate, landscapes, rural prosperity, social justice and the empowerment of smallholders and family farmers are all connected.

26. This is also why we must unleash the potential of bringing together our national pathways for achieving SDG 2 in an integrated manner with all of the SDGs, with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Programmes of Action.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region has an extensive tradition of integrating these dimensions through territorial approaches and through governance structures that connect ministries, stakeholders and research.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

27. The CFS policy guidelines I have highlighted are negotiated and agreed upon in an inclusive process that engages your senior officials in capitals and your representatives in Rome.

28. As such, these are your resources, your policy instruments to be adopted and utilized in the formulation of policies, strategies, legislation, regulatory frameworks and business models.

29. I warmly invite those countries in this region that are not yet Members of CFS to join and be part of this family. It is easy, it is free and it is meaningful.

30. I believe that CFS should play an important role as a platform where you find the space to share your efforts, showcase your progress, present your national pathways and national strategies and learn from each other across regions and stakeholders.

31. I am committed to this and look to you, our Members and partners, to continue utilizing CFS in this way, by connecting the local and national level realities of your countries to the global space provided by CFS and making full use of the agreements we achieve at the global CFS arena in your policies and strategies.

32. In conclusion, allow me to once again thank the FAO Director-General, QU Dongyu, the FAO Regional Office in Santiago, Chile, the Honourable Minister Rubén Flores of Ecuador for hosting us, and you, honourable Ministers, for your continued support to, and partnership with, CFS.

33. I warmly invite you, Excellencies, to join your peer Ministers of other regions at the Annual Plenary of the Committee in October this year in FAO headquarters, in Rome.

Thank you, all.