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منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Thirty-third Session

Rome, Italy, 9-13 May 2016

Statement by the Chairperson of the CFS

Honorable Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon,

Director-General of FAO, Your Excellencies,

Independent Chair of the Council,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly honored to be here with you today, as the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to address this Regional Conference for my region and to inform you about the most recent accomplishments of CFS and some of the activities that we will undertake in the upcoming months.

Since the Committee was reformed in 2009 to become more effective and inclusive by adopting a multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder structure, I am proud to say that the Committee has achieved many remarkable results.

As I update you on the last two CFS sessions (CFS 41 and 42), I would like you to reflect on CFS work of particular relevance to your country and our region, and how, going forward, CFS policy recommendations and guidelines can be used in support of country policies for food security and nutrition in the Near East region. I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you about the CFS Programme of Work for 2016-2017, and encourage regional multi-stakeholder representatives to actively participate in the activities that the Committee will carry out in the next two years.

Thanks to the commitment and the hard work of my predecessor, Ambassador Gerda Verburg, the Committee achieved some important accomplishments in the previous biennium, the most notable of

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which are the endorsement of the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and The Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises.

In our region, many countries are net food importers. Ensuring sustainable food security and nutrition for all will require in the near future major investments in agriculture and food systems. But we don't just need more investment, we need better and more targeted investment to ensure it benefits those that need it most! Obviously public funds cannot provide all the finance that is needed. The private sector is the greatest investor and they will provide the bulk of the resources. Earlier this week I participated in a workshop organized by FAO especially for the business sector to foster their knowledge and incentivize the use of the CFS-RAI principles. Business people in the Near East also need to know and understand the benefits of making use of the Principles.

Conflicts and protracted crises are obviously still the main drivers of food insecurity in our region. Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, are the countries where we observe the most worrisome levels of food insecurity in MENA. But the whole region is affected as people's mobility impacts the capacity of a country to feed all people living within its boundaries. The Framework for Action for food security and nutrition in protracted crises bridges the gap between humanitarian and development interventions and provides experience-based principles for addressing critical manifestations of food insecurity and undernutrition and resolving their underlying causes in the context of crises and protracted emergencies. I will be taking this message to the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey in May, and I hope I can count on all of you to advocate the use of this guidance.

All stakeholders are now strongly encouraged to implement the recommendations included in these two documents. Our governments have endorsed these products and it is UP TO ALL OF US to use them in our policy and planning.

At the Forty-first session of CFS, the Plenary endorsed two sets of policy recommendations, which were scientifically informed by the reports of the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE). The policy recommendations on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture and those on Food Losses and Waste are relevant to our region in different ways.

The 42nd session of CFS marked the beginning of our work in a number of new areas. At its last session, the Committee decided to put the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the center of its work. A key feature of the 2030 Agenda is its universality, as it applies to all countries, developing as well as developed, and all actors. CFS, being the most inclusive platform for all stakeholders working on food security and nutrition, has already repeatedly been cited as a reference. A working group on SDGs has been established and your representatives in Rome are currently identifying how CFS can play a constructive role in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs, by supporting country implementation and providing an effective, inclusive, and multidisciplinary platform for discussion.

Following the Second International Conference on Nutrition, the Committee decided to step up its efforts to address malnutrition in all its forms, in particular by better understanding the relationship between nutrition and food systems. To fulfil this mandate, the Committee has requested a report from the HLPE on Nutrition and Food Systems for 2017, and it established a working group that is proposing how CFS can better advance the nutrition agenda.

A High-Level Forum on Connecting Smallholders to Markets took place in June 2015. The Forum discussed policy implications and possible solutions to some of the challenges that smallholders face when trying to link themselves to markets, such as supporting smallholder-targeted credit systems and infrastructure, or facilitating production diversification to increase resilience to climate and price shocks. Next month we will work to draw out recommendations that can help in overcoming barriers and maximizing opportunities in value chains for smallholders and we hope to endorse them at CFS 43 in October.

The Committee also foresees work on two pressing topics: Urbanization and Rural Transformation; and Women's Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition. In addition, the High-Level Panel

of Experts has been tasked to prepare a report on Sustainable Agricultural Development, including Livestock, in 2016; and another report on Sustainable Forestry in 2017. These will lead to CFS developing new policy recommendations.

Over the course of 2016, CFS will go through an external, independent evaluation process to assess its effectiveness since the 2009 reform. This comprehensive review of the CFS work and model comes at the right time, six years following the reform of CFS, as it will help identify how CFS can continue to evolve and improve to be even more relevant and responsive to the challenges of our time.

As you can see, our work programme is intense but it addresses challenging issues that need global solutions. There are 790 million people still suffering from chronic hunger in the world, many are from our region. It is for them that we need to continue our mission to ensure that all people enjoy their right to food and nutrition. It is for them that I am here today, to make an appeal to help me spread the voice about the work of CFS and the tremendous impact that we can achieve if we work together. The Committee is strongly committed to bringing the various actors together across disciplines, constituencies and borders and we will do our utmost to increase the level of outreach and to foster collaboration, participation and ownership of local, national and regional stakeholders.

However, we are all conscious that the successful implementation of our bold and rich programme will not be possible without the continuous commitment of all CFS members. As Chair of CFS, I want to thank your countries for the contributions that you have made so far and also take this opportunity to call upon your governments to request any possible and additional financial support that you would be able to provide.

Let me conclude with an appeal to make the plea of the UN Secretary-General, “Leave no one behind by 2030”, our motto for the coming years. If we can make that happen, I can assure you that food security and nutrition will be within reach. So let us start working now. This is the future we want!

Thank you for your attention!