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

His Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Vladimir Bolea,

FAO Director-General, Dr QU Dongyu,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen

1. As the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), I am honoured to speak to you today on this important occasion, the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe.
2. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Republic of Moldova for officially hosting this Regional Conference, as well as to FAO and all the organizers for their diligent work in convening this significant gathering.
3. I would also like to, again, express my gratitude to the Director-General of FAO, Dr QU Dongyu, for this invitation and the privilege of engaging with you on the multidimensional nature of food security and nutrition.
4. The CFS was established 50 years ago as a platform for intergovernmental coordination and as a standing committee of the FAO Council. The CFS currently comprises 141 Members and, following reforms in 2009, also includes a wider range of participants, such as civil society and indigenous peoples, the private sector and international financial institutions, among others. It facilitates multistakeholder collaboration and global policy convergence in support of the progressive realization of the right to food in the context of national food security.
5. In the face of multiple challenges, the CFS plays three strategic roles. First, as a provider of policy guidance for countries and regions: CFS consolidates scientific evidence provided by its

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High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) to develop and facilitate multilateral agreement on policy recommendations and guidelines.

6. Second, as a collaborative platform: the CFS facilitates strategic coordination among the three Rome-based United Nations agencies (FAO, the World Food Programme [WFP] and the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD]) and beyond, promoting synergies, resource optimization and multistakeholder participation in the area of food security and nutrition.

7. Third, as a dynamic knowledge exchange platform: the CFS fosters dialogue on regional- and country-level efforts, enabling Members to benefit from adapted policy guidance products and best practices.

8. Across the Europe and Central Asia region, there have been significant efforts to implement the CFS guidelines, with a particular focus on improving tenure governance in South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. These efforts have been supported by FAO through the application of CFS's *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure* (VGGT). Technical support was provided to ten countries, focusing mainly on land consolidation programmes and land banking (in North Macedonia, Montenegro, Armenia, Georgia, Türkiye, Azerbaijan), as well as on strengthening tenure rights and access to land (in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia). Furthermore, the VGGT were used to guide reforms of the land code in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the introduction of a digital land cadastre in Turkmenistan.

9. In North Macedonia, which has developed into the region's flagship country for FAO's support to land consolidation since 2014, the implementation of the VGGT illustrates the success factors and challenges in applying CFS policy tools. The programme highlighted the importance of sustained commitment to reforms by local stakeholders, as well as of inclusive and participatory processes. Another major lesson from the North Macedonian experience was the crucial role of capacity building in the effective implementation of legislative reforms.

10. In Armenia, FAO supported the government in setting up a social protection programme using the CFS policy recommendations on social protection for food security and nutrition as a key resource. The intervention had a tangible impact on the 133 households that participated in the program, improving both key nutrition indicators for women and children and their knowledge of agricultural production, highlighting the transformative impact of CFS policy agreements. Nevertheless, the program also revealed some of the challenges affecting the uptake of CFS policy products, such as a lack of technical implementation capacities at local government level, which represented a barrier to scaling up these interventions.

11. In addition to the valuable work carried out by FAO within the Europe and Central Asia region, CFS policy products have also been used by various other stakeholders. In Italy for example, farmers associations have made use of the CFS policy recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets by establishing shortened food supply chains. This intervention benefited about 20 000 farmers and significantly improved access to markets, especially for women and youth. Beyond these achievements, this example highlighted the challenge of adapting CFS policy products to local contexts and making them accessible for end users.

12. Despite these examples of the successful implementation of CFS policy agreements, challenges persist, including the rather limited knowledge of the CFS and its policy agreements in many countries, the need to adapt the consensus-based policy products of a global nature to fit local contexts and respond to the needs of different stakeholder groups or the low technical capacities at local government level, to name only a few.

13. Several countries in this region are not yet members of the Committee on World Food Security. This underlines the fact that we need to intensify our efforts to increase awareness and knowledge about the CFS and its policy agreements. We need concerted commitment to further disseminate and promote the policy agreements already used in the region, as well as those which have not been applied thus far, where this has resulted from a lack of awareness.

14. Addressing these challenges will require joint action and further engagement at the political and technical levels. In the spirit of cooperation, I urge all Members to actively incorporate the recommendations developed by this Committee into their national strategies.

15. The financial resources for CFS activities remain below their potential and represent a critical lever for the successful uptake of the Committee's policy products. I am grateful to those Members whose invaluable support is already enabling our hard work towards achieving food security and better nutrition for all. To those Members who have the capacity to do so but have not yet stepped forward to support the implementation of the current Multi-Year Programme of Work, I encourage you to follow their lead.

16. As donors, some of you have considerable leverage on the prioritization of different policy tools at country level. Promoting the use of CFS policy agreements at project and institutional levels in the context of your national strategies for development aid presents a unique opportunity for all of you to enhance the impact of the CFS.

17. To those countries that are not yet members of the Committee, I extend a warm invitation to join the CFS family. Your active participation and contributions are critical to shaping the global dialogue on food security and nutrition.

18. In closing, we would like to extend a warm invitation for our dear Ministers, present here today, to participate in the high-level segment of the upcoming 52nd Plenary Session of CFS in October, taking place in this city.

19. Our continued collaboration is essential to achieving regional and global goals to end hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

Thank you for your commitment and support.

Ambassador Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile

Chairperson

Committee on World Food Security