OPENING REMARKS

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Online Regional Capacity Building Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean on Juncao Technology and its Support to Achieve Sustainable Agriculture and the SDGs

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Mr. Peter Charles David , Minister of Agriculture of Grenada,
Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat, Minister of Agriculture, Land Fisheries, Trinidad and Tobago,
Your Excellency Ms. Maria Eunises Rivas Robleto, Executive Secretary of Nicaraguan Council for Science and Technology,
Ms.Kyra Paul, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Blue and Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security,
Ms. GUO Ningning, Executive Vice Governor of Fujian Provincial People's Government, China,
Mr. DENG Boqing,Vice Chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency,
Professor LIN Zhanxi,
Prof. Arailde Urben,
Distinguished participants from Latin America and the Caribbean, and China
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I am pleased to welcome all of you to this online "Regional Capacity Building Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean on Juncao Technology and its Support to Achieve Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Development Goals."

Many thanks to China International Development Cooperation Agency, Foreign Affairs Office of Fujian Provincial People's Government of China, National Engineering Research Centre for Juncao Technology of the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU) of China, for partnering with UNDESA to organize this workshop.

I would also like to welcome participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador,

Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay.

As we meet today, the world is still recovering from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also grappling with the effects of unprecedented emergencies of the climate crisis, pollution, desertification and biodiversity loss.

The United Nations Secretary-General's recent report tracking progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has shown that COVID-19 has already undermined decades of development efforts and has setback the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs everywhere.

The combined social, economic, and health impact of the pandemic has outpaced any other major crisis in recent history. The pandemic has also undermined the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world, hitting the poorest and groups in vulnerable situations the most. The agricultural sector in Latin America and the Caribbean plays a vital role in producing food and ecosystem services that benefit not only the region but the entire planet. Today, millions of farmers and livestock keepers throughout the region struggle to overcome the impacts of a global health crisis, an economic slowdown, unprecedented weather shocks, and a crippling migrant crisis.

In the face of all these challenges, science, technology and innovation must be at the center of COVID-19 recovery that moves us closer to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

There is a need for long-term, multisectoral responses and a bold recovery plan that includes the transfer of appropriate technology such as Juncao to developing countries. The transfer of such technologies should benefit smallholder farmers, people living in poverty, women and youth, and groups in vulnerable situations.

In particular, a bold recovery should aim at building back better a sustainable, resilient, and more equitable economy and society that prioritizes investments in areas such as sustainable agriculture, climate change mitigation, social protection, and tackling inequalities between and within countries.

Even before the pandemic, such initiatives were called for to put us on the right track.

The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, written by a group of independent scientists, stressed that progress was not moving in the right direction in critical areas like climate action and reducing biodiversity loss, and reducing inequality. The scientists identified entry points for transformation, including food systems and nutrition patterns, where interlinkages among the SDGs are especially strong and where actions can harness synergies to accelerate progress, recognizing that the nature of transformations would vary according to specific national contexts. The scientists urged for the need to utilize new technologies to manage trade-offs among goals, but they also warned that successful application and adoption of technologies requires coordinated efforts with other levers of change like governance, business and finance, and individual and collective action.

Last fall, the Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit advanced further thinking and action to transform food systems and tap into synergies among the SDGs while also motivating coordinated action. National dialogues took place in countries around the world during the summit to encourage new partnerships and share knowledge about promising initiatives and technologies such as the Juncao technology. Across the world, there is a strong desire to learn more about technologies that can be applied and posititively impact people's lives.

This desire to learn and share the benefits of appropriate technologies is one key message that comes out each year from the annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) that DESA convenes each spring. For instance, during the Forum last year, there was explicit attention to the role of technology in advancing progress towards SDG 2 on ending hunger in preparations for the review of this SDG during the High-level political forum. In combination with assessments of SDG 1 on poverty and SDG 8 on economic growth and decent jobs, it was made clear that progress would depend on scaling up and sharing effective technologies for food production, including especially for smallholder and family farmers.

Our discussions today provide a timely opportunity for an exchange of national experiences from across Latin America and the Caribbean in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am hopeful that during this exchange of experiences, we will learn more about how initiatives and partnerships linked to science, technology and innovation are contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through synergies, while strengthening its role in facilitating knowledge transfer and offering space for networking.

Professor Lin, in a short while, will brief us on the science of Juncao. For the benefit of those who are learning about this technology for the first time, "jun" translates as "fungi" and "cao" as "grass".

This technology enables circular production involving grass, mushrooms and livestock, and ushers in economic, social and environmental benefits in a way that is conducive to ecological, food and energy security. Hence, the technology embodies, in concrete ways, the integration and interlinkages of the SDGs. Professor Lin's invention is helping to improve people's lives and livelihoods in more than 100 countries across the world.

Country experiences show that farmers who have learned to plant Juncao grass have successfully expanded livestock production, grown mushrooms for meeting demands of local and regional markets, and creating jobs and income streams.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Juncao Project, which was launched in 2017 with generous support from the People's Republic of China, underscores the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 17 that seeks to revitalize global partnerships to support sustainable development through funding, capacity-building, peer learning and knowledge sharing, debt sustainability, trade facilitation, effective public–private partnerships and access to technologies. Goal 17 also involves the means of implementation, without which none of the other Sustainable Development Goals could be realized.

The first phase of the UNDESA Juncao Project was implemented between May 2017 and June 2021. We have just launched the second phase of the project in July last year and and this second phase will conclude in June 2024. We are pleased to inform you that more countries have expressed an interest to be included in this new phase, including countries in your region.

Together with Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU) of China, we will continue to work with interested countries towards ensuring that poor rural women and unemployed youth have sustainable livelihoods and decent employment through support to capacity-building efforts aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture.

We will organize online training courses, workshops, and study tours to promote the transfer, adoption, and use of Juncao technology. We also hope to provide small research grants to local experts in the project countries, strengthening national institutional capacity to conduct research on localizing Juncao technology and offer extension services to the farmers. When successfully implemented, the Juncao technology will contribute to addressing poverty and hunger, employment and environmental concerns in rural areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As underscore at the Food systems summit last year, we need agri-food systems that are more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. DESA stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders by supporting additional activities to enhance knowledge sharing and strengthen national capacities of Latin America and the Caribbean countries to promote productive activities, income generation, and entrepreneurship by using the Juncao technology, leaving no one behind.

I wish you all success.

Thank you.

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