



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**THIRD SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Sustainability Approach in Specified Areas

Food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, drought and desertification, land degradation

Honorable Co-chairs,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to make these remarks on behalf of the Troika composed of Italy, Spain and Turkey. I would like to thank Co-Chairs and the Secretariat for the support and hard work in organizing the third meeting of the Open Working Group on SDGs.

The topics under discussion today are among the most important fundamentals of sustainable development. Eradication of hunger and the promotion of food security and nutrition is a moral and political imperative which requires bold effective action at all levels. We have less than 1000 days until we reach the deadline for achieving the MDGs and much still needs to be done.

We need to focus our attention on reconfirming and integrating MDG1 in SDGs. The United Nations Secretary General's initiative "Zero Hunger Challenge" provides us a valuable input in this sense.

A challenging vision has emerged from the work of the global thematic consultation on Hunger, Food and Nutrition Security lead by FAO and WFP. This was articulated through an on-line consultation between December 2012 and January 2013, a special session of the Committee on Food Security in Rome in February 2013 and a High Level Event held in Madrid in April 2013.

On the other hand, sustainable food systems and agriculture play a fundamentally prominent role in the achievement of food security and nutrition, and also in the economic growth and development.

Nutrition for all is the ultimate purpose of food security: it is essential to overcome the dual challenges of under and over nutrition throughout the life of a person.

Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition, drought and desertification as well as land degradation are interconnected issues. SDGs require a holistic, multidimensional and integrated approach also to solve negative economic, social, and environmental trade-offs in a long term perspective providing for a stronger policy coherence and stronger accountability.

As reflected at the “High Level Consultation on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in the Post-2015 Development Framework”, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition can be ended sustainably within a generation. Transformational changes are required, and actions must be framed under the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food for everyone, focusing on the most vulnerable. In that context, innovative alternatives to international cooperation and aid to food insecure countries should be devised.

Agriculture has strategic importance for rural development and employment generation. Accordingly, increasing productivity and quality in the sector will support sustainable development process and green growth. However, sound agricultural policies need to be adopted in order to strengthen this sector and help producers – particularly those in a vulnerable situation – to increasing sustainable food production and productivity and to overcome current challenges. In this respect, providing agricultural and rural development supports in accordance with the protection of the environment, and parallel to that, introducing financial supports for sustainable agricultural practices are essential.

The agricultural sector has opportunities that can reduce poverty and increase food security and nutrition while protecting biodiversity. It is necessary to have a people-centered approach, to support and empower small producers and women, and encourage them for collective production and marketing activities, in order to ensure a fair income and higher food production. Also, off-farm activities will contribute to diversification of rural income, in terms of job creation, local growth and development, equity and inclusiveness.

Distinguished Delegates,

Agriculture depends on bio-diversity and natural resources. Among all, water and soil are the basics. According to UNEP estimates, the global food production occupies 25% of all habitable land and is responsible for 70% of fresh water consumption, 80% of deforestation, and 30% of greenhouse gas emissions. It is the largest single driver of biodiversity loss and land-use change.

Sustainable agricultural systems based on sound ecosystem approaches can reduce the negative impacts of agriculture on the environment and enrich the natural capital and the flow of ecosystem services, enhance the diversity and nutritional value of food.

There is a need for a transformational change in food system patterns which should be productive, income generating and respectful to nature and ecosystem.

Sustainable agricultural production and productivity has to be improved together with the functioning of markets and trading systems. These issues necessitate increasing public and private investment in sustainable agriculture and rural development. We all know that sufficient food is produced in our world but the problems of distribution, post-harvest losses all along the value chain and the lack of infrastructure lead to food insecurity in several countries.

We would like to point out that fair trade is still an important issue for fair distribution of welfare especially among agriculture dependent LDCs. Moreover, promotion of the participation of farmers, especially smallholders, including women, in local, regional and international markets could be a key issue to achieve food security.

Protection of agricultural lands, efficient use of water for irrigation, productive use of soil resources and rational agricultural product planning should be realized to support sustainable development processes. In the same way, investments and R&D activities in agriculture should be intensified in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Besides protection of environment and natural resources, sustainable agricultural practices should ensure high level of competitiveness. In this context, rural development and green growth potential of agricultural industry should be utilized.

As it is well known, agriculture is under threat of climate change, resulting in increased number of floods, droughts and desertification. Agricultural ecosystems must be managed as part of the wider landscape while reinforcing the natural resilience of the land.

Distinguished Participants,

Desertification and land degradation are not mere environmental problems: they are a threat to world stability and a driver of economic stagnation, poverty, insecurity and migration. Desertification affects about one sixth of the world population, seventy percent of all dry lands and one quarter of the total land area of the world and some fifty million people could be displaced by desertification and land degradation within the next ten years.

Therefore, we have to continue to assist people already facing the negative effects of desertification, land degradation and drought as well as promoting a sustainable land management on a global scale.

In order to address these problems countries should attach importance to effective management of water and forests. Afforestation, erosion control, rangeland and degraded forest rehabilitation works play a vital role against desertification and erosion.

In this context, it is essential to monitor and assess economic and social effects of desertification, land degradation and drought in order to combat with them.

While dealing with these problems, necessary precautions should be taken in order to strengthen the capacity and resilience of countries against drought.

Hence, early warning systems related to desertification, land degradation and drought at the global, regional and sub-regional levels still need to be improved via sharing of related information and creation of new data systems.

Despite progress in tackling poverty and hunger, one billion people living in degraded lands continued to suffer from hunger and remained in poverty. Since the geography of poverty and hunger overlaps with that of degraded and dry lands and regions prone to drought, we have the obligation, for present and future generations, to keep up and even increase the production of food and other raw materials, including for industrial and energy use, but we have to do it better, in a much smarter and forward looking manner.

A strong common effort should aim at more sustainable food and agricultural systems from an economic, environmental and social perspective at all levels. The challenge is immense and requires the involvement of a vast array of stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities. For this, the Committee on Food Security (CFS) should continue to play a fundamental role as the foremost inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for food security and nutrition.

Efforts towards a land-degradation-neutral world require reinforcing national capacities to design and implement plans and programs.

FAO estimated that near 900 million people are undernourished, which amounts to 12 percent of world population in 2012. It is quite clear that, rapid population growth will worsen the challenge of undernourishment considering the scarcity of our natural resources and expected effects of climate change. Therefore, urgent action is needed to ensure food security and nutrition.

Strong interdependencies between the thematic issues on which we are focusing today exist and there is a pressing need for the international community to thoroughly consider and tackle the interlinkages and crosscutting issues among these themes such as, the food, energy, water.

All kinds of means should be used and every effort should be made to improve knowledge of producers and consumers in terms of food security. Labeling and certification could be among the right instruments to increase awareness on food safety which in turn contribute food security.

One of the topics in food security is the loss and waste of food at different stages of food supply and consumption. Solutions could be found in diversifying and scaling-up production and marketing methods, for instance, by improving harvest techniques, farmer education, extension services, storage facilities and cooling chains.

We also need to change our consumption behaviour by raising awareness and empowering citizens to make informed choices especially in developed countries. Furthermore, food waste, other than being immoral and unacceptable, has an enormous impact on natural resources and is a contributor to negative environmental impacts.

We recognize the need to maintain natural ecological processes that support food production systems. New techniques are critical to improving harvest and providing land productivity despite climate change.

Food prices have become another major concern for the world's populations in recent years. While some researchers point out that food price volatility is becoming an issue of concern, some others underline the high prices, not volatility, are the real problem. Regardless of which of these arguments are true, we need to devise means to address the root causes of rising prices which are adversely affecting poor and vulnerable people.

Honorable Co-Chairs,

This brings me to my last points,

Sustainable development goals that this group will recommend should ensure that we have made some progress in terms of addressing the challenges that the world faces today and tomorrow.

The issues, which we have been focusing today, should be covered in the context of SDGs in such a way to reflect;

- Right to Food approach: Food security and nutrition at the future agenda must be framed under the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food for everyone.
- People's empowerment and a strategy focused on people, especially on women and youth, gender equity and small producers, with a bottom-up territorial approach.
- Keeping up and even increase the production of food and other raw materials, including for industrial and energy use in a much smarter and forward looking manner,
- Increasing agricultural productivity in a sustainable way together with job creation and income generation activities,
- Improving efficiency of resource use,
- Preparing national action plans for food and nutrition through participation of all stakeholders,
- Improving food security and nutrition via decreasing losses in food chain and effective food stock management,
- Taking into consideration nutritional dimension and increasing awareness in order to overcome the dual challenges of under and over nutrition,
- Focusing on sustainable land management to prevent land degradation, erosion, desertification and deforestation,
- Raising awareness of producers and consumers in terms of all these topics.
- Ensuring a strong and transparent governance at all levels.

I hope that we will be able to integrate sustainability approach into policies in all these areas.

I thank you.