

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING RENEWED PARTNERSHIP FOR A UNIFIED APPROACH TO
END HUNGER IN AFRICA**

OPENING REMARKS BY

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Government of Ethiopia and the African Union for making this high-level meeting possible, and the Instituto Lula for promoting this partnership.

This meeting of African and international leaders is a sign of the growing importance attached to dialogue and coordination on food security and related issues.

It is a dialogue between leaders, between regions, it is a dialogue with development partners and with non-state actors.

This dialogue is a vivid confirmation that African countries, together with their neighbors and partners from other regions, are increasingly determined to build a developed, prosperous and sustainable Africa.

This region is witnessing economic growth of unprecedented proportions. It has a vibrant and young population and vast natural resources.

These are promising signs, but that will not automatically translate into a better life for all its citizens.

We need to harness Africa's great potential to make this happen. And ensuring the right to food of everyone is a vital first step in this direction.

Africa is the only region in the world where the total number of hungry people has gone up since 1990.

On the other hand, many African countries have already met the internationally established hunger reduction targets set for 2015.

Two weeks ago in Rome, the FAO Conference recognized 38 countries in the world, 11 of them from Africa, for their achievements.

Eight African countries out of those 11 have met the First Millennium Development Goal hunger target, to reduce by half the proportion of hungry people since 1990: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

President Yayi Boni from Benin is among the leaders that were present personally in Rome to accept this recognition.

Three countries have also met the even more ambitious World Food Summit goal to reduce by half the total number of hungry: Djibouti, Ghana, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of former President of Ghana John Kufuor, whose leadership contributed to make this happen.

These countries are an inspiration for all of us. Now that they have charted the course, we must ride this wave of progress.

This high-level meeting is considering an even bolder goal: to eradicate hunger in Africa by 2025.

The political commitment of governments, the full backing of society, and the support, as needed, of the development community are central elements to make this happen.

And FAO is ready to rally behind African leadership to meet this goal.

We will do this working within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), with the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and let me acknowledge the presence of Ibrahim Mayaki here today, and other partners.

Africa has come a long way since the launch of NEPAD in 2001, proposed by a small group of heads of state. These included former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, who is also here today.

Over thirty countries have already signed a CAADP compact and 27 have developed investment plans. FAO is proud to support this process, alongside many other partners that are here.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One challenge we face to transform our vision of a food-secure Africa into reality is the need to tackle the multiple causes of hunger and scale-up successful actions.

Small-scale and family farmers are the main responsible for producing the food that is eaten in Africa and in most developing countries. And agriculture remains the main source of employment for millions of people.

To achieve food security and to do it in a sustainable way, we must work with the small-scale producers, helping them increase their production and productivity.

In recognition of the role that agriculture as a whole, and family production in particular, plays in food security, 2014 has been declared by the United Nations General Assembly the International Year of Family Farming. Africa will also celebrate in 2014 the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa.

We need to work with small-scale producers, but we need to do more, complementing this effort with actions in other areas.

Let me share the message given by Nobel Prize winner Professor Amartya Sen to the FAO Conference in Rome two weeks ago.

Professor Sen reminded us that increasing food production is not enough to put an end to hunger – the world already produces enough food to all.

We also need to look at access to food, and ensure that poor families have the means to produce the food they need or earn the income needed to buy their food.

And when we can link these two - production and protection - we also put in place conditions for local economic development.

More money means that poor families can buy locally, stimulating subsistence and small-scale farmers to produce more for the local markets.

The Zero Hunger experience in Brazil, which was the direct result of the deep political commitment of former President Lula, is just one example of how this can work out.

In China and Vietnam, and in many other countries around the world as well as here in Africa, there are many examples of how this integrated approach yields positive outcomes. Yesterday, for example, we heard the successful cases of Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger presented here in this forum.

Each country needs to find its own solutions for food insecurity, it's own menu, but that does not mean that we need to start from scratch.

We can learn from the experiences of other countries, adapt ideas so that they can fit into different realities and needs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Countries are increasingly connected to one another by globalization.

What happens to our neighbors one way or the other also affects us. We have seen in Africa how conflicts have crossed national frontiers.

And we have seen how, in many cases, hunger or the dispute over natural resources, especially land and water, has caused or worsened conflict.

There is a clear link between food security and peace; as there is between hunger and conflict.

By contributing to fight hunger, FAO hopes to also give a small contribution to peace in the region.

We are learning that there can be no food security in one country alone. And that no country can end hunger working alone. Africa knows that and is acting on that.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am confident that this meeting will help transform the political will and leadership you are showing in the fight against hunger into further and coordinated action at the national and the regional levels.

Let me conclude by saying that ending hunger is not charity. And that this can be the generation that can put an end to hunger, in Africa and in the world.

Let us now seize this opportunity, together.

Thank you very much.