

Building A Dynamic FAO for A Better World

Speech at the 41st Session of the FAO Conference

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Distinguished Chairperson of the Conference,

Honorable Ministers and Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

It is a special weekend for me, for you and for FAO. I've realized that many of you have flown for many hours to come to Rome, to make history and record new history. I am the last speaker, my speech will be short, so that you have the time to go outside and enjoy the late afternoon of Rome.

In April, I presented my manifesto to the Council meeting with **our vision: "Building a Dynamic FAO for a Better World"** by uniting forces of Member Countries and integrating functions of government, market, NGOs and people. **Our Strategy should focus on attaining "Zero Hunger" and improving nutrition and livelihood of people by "four betters": better production, better nutrition, better environment and a better life.**

And more importantly, I proposed **five actions: focusing on Zero Hunger and targeted poverty eradication in the world's impoverished regions and vulnerable populations; focusing on weaknesses of tropical agriculture which is the main battleground for the fragile poor and hunger; focusing on bottlenecks of dryland farming which is suffering from drought and water shortage, even worse threatened by climate change; promoting digital farming and digital rural development by embracing the digital era and ICT application; and improving agricultural production and value chains for sustainable development.**

With enabling policies, innovative approaches, stronger investment and capacity building of Member Countries; we can promote income driving from low to middle and high levels, making farmers happier, rural areas more attractive and our world more beautiful.

Such proposal, strategy and actions have been widely shared with increases of strong confidence and strength. I hope we are on the same page to run FAO business later.

Nowadays, the world is deeply changing with major challenges and

great opportunities. Urbanization, industrialization, digitalization and globalization have been indicating new waves and creating new dynamics. Global food security and nutrition-based health management are becoming daily topics.

Attraction of agriculture and rural areas is withering. Agriculture is much affected by natural disaster, increasing market volatility, trans-boundary diseases and pests and climate change. Farmers are suffering from income instability, insecure social protection and shortage of public services. Going out of villages and looking for jobs in the cities are becoming a rational choice for young farmers. Furthermore, due to crises and conflicts, more and more farmers are displaced and forced to migrate. The theme of 2019 FAO Conference on “Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development” is highly relevant.

Meanwhile, the context of globalization is changing in line with digitalization among younger generation all over the world, which has deeply altered the mindset and lifestyles of young farmers, and production chain, supply chain and value chain of farming.

At such critical point of the century, we should face all problems and innovate with structural reform. If elected, I will head FAO to take initiatives to improve and rejuvenate itself for better performance and better governance of global food and agriculture, along with farmer’s livelihood, using all tools in the toolbox and a package of solutions strategically and pragmatically.

FAO needs to further build up its unique strength as a specialized knowledge-based organization, enhance its capacity to provide firm support on policy, technology and information to Member Countries, and do its utmost to become a reliable and beneficial international specialized organization with core competence.

First, FAO needs further understanding of sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a blueprint of development drawn by the whole world. Under this framework, it is important that FAO promote sustainable agricultural development and focus on the 7 SDGs directly connected to its functions, namely: **Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere. **Goal 2.** End hunger to achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. **Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. **Goal**

6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. **Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. **Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. **Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

While giving priority to SDG 1 and SDG 2, FAO also needs to leverage its specialized advantages to support the **21 SDG indicators** under its custodianship and the **6 indicators** for which it's a contributing agency.

In addition, the 2030 Agenda requires us to revisit the concept of food and agriculture in the new era, establish **inclusive, efficient and responsible food and agriculture systems** to integrate production, processing, consumption and trade, so as to ensure the supply of adequate, healthy and nutritious food, and realize harmony with environment (forestry, fisheries, soil and grassland) and close connection with rural development.

When I was a child, my grandma always took me to pick mushrooms in the neighboring hills. She told me that we should leave the old mushrooms to spread spores and the young and small ones to grow. This is the only way to ensure that we could have constant supply of mushrooms within season. That was my original idea on sustainability.

All staff of FAO system must understand the role of sustainable agricultural development in realizing the SDGs (including sustainable livestock, sustainable aquaculture, and sustainable forestry, etc.) and be responsible for the customized services in the sustainable agricultural development of Member Countries.

Second, FAO should strengthen innovative spirit.

Faced with new situations and new challenges, FAO needs innovation for new structures and new approaches. While inheriting traditional farming, FAO should also embrace and apply modern science and technologies and adopt innovative approaches for the development of global food and agriculture.

Innovation of mindset. FAO should be problem-oriented, listening to voices of Member Countries, civil society, private sector and field people,

comprehensively understanding issues and prioritizing options.

Innovation of approaches. FAO should offer more innovative services for key issues, retain and strengthen its most important practices and outputs such as flagship knowledge products, and make them more influential with new technologies.

Innovation of application by digitalization. FAO should better promote digital farming and digital rural development, and establish a popular "FAO Online" platform to integrate information and data on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, entities of production and management, specialty agri-commodities and beautiful villages of Member Countries, and that of relevant institutions and other agencies around the world.

Innovation of technologies. FAO should be innovation driven, develop toolboxes for different countries, and strengthen the application of new materials, new equipment, new technologies, diseases and pest control, biotechnology, and farming machineries for medium and small farmers, etc. The Organization should also strengthen cooperation with CGIAR, national agricultural research systems (NARS) and relevant universities of Member Countries, R&D departments of multinational corporations, civil society and think tanks, etc.

Innovation of cooperation models. FAO should enhance North-South Cooperation, expand South-South Cooperation and focus on specialized cooperation, match-making cooperation among agricultural eco-zones and belts of similar latitudes, and partnerships on similar agri-commodities, for joint development of global agriculture and marketing.

Innovation of institutional structure. FAO needs to set up a special office for small island states, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries and other vulnerable areas. Demonstration farming households should be promoted in Member Countries on new varieties, new technologies and new practices to improve farmer's yield.

Innovation first and second..., farmers should benefit the most, and rural development of Member Countries is crucial development.

Earlier this year in January, I met Mr. Rodgers Kirwa, a young farmer from Kenya at the GFFA in Berlin. He is working with his fellow farmers

in Africa to develop agriculture with ICT. Mr. Kirwa asked me to arrange his visit to Alibaba in China for e-commerce. I promised and helped him go. He is satisfied.

Third, FAO should forge a corporate culture of inclusiveness, truth seeking, solidarity and collaboration.

With strong scientist background, I have always stood by the principle of carefulness, truth seeking, inclusiveness and collaboration, and science-based standards. FAO should oppose bureaucracy, and be target and result-oriented; operate with impartiality and based on rules of the UN Charter, FAO's Basic Text and relevant regulations; maintain inclusive of diverse cultures, ideas and practices of different countries; and, firmly oppose power abuse and offer protection for whistle blowers.

FAO should strengthen interactions with Member Countries and other stakeholders to forge political willingness and commitment to food security, assist Member Countries in creating enabling environment for agricultural development. If elected, I will fully utilize my networks with other authorities, private sectors and academia, and my long-term experiences in international cooperation to explore partnerships with other development agencies and investment institutions.

Honorable Ministers and Delegates,

I know that you all hold big expectation for FAO to improve its performance and internal management on issues such as lack of professional expertise and transparency, and slow response to Member Countries. This shows Member Countries' strong hope for FAO, and your dedication to global food and agriculture.

Your concerns and critic points to the gaps need to be addressed by FAO. If elected, I will carry out effective reform to tackle the most urgent problems and challenges, so that Member Countries will have more to gain from FAO, and our staff will be better proud of their job.

First, I will enhance professionalism throughout the FAO system.

I will establish a consultation commission with global representation. It will include experts from different regions, countries and professional backgrounds, and from governments, academia, business and farmers.

I will invite a number of chief scientists to cover the following areas:

development strategy and policy, digital farming and digital rural development, food security and nutrition, trans-boundary diseases control and environment, climate change and biodiversity conservation, small island development and fisheries, and market information and trade.

I will promote coordination with CGIAR, NARS and relevant universities of Member Countries, and private sectors, for utilization of external expertise to strengthen professional consultation on global food and agriculture.

I will upgrade professional expertise of all FAO staff, especially the T-shaped skill set for those at mid-and-senior levels, combining deep understanding in certain areas and an extensive knowledge base.

I will also lead FAO to work with Member Countries for strengthening technical cooperation, capacity building and joint training, and transform policies, norm setting (Codex, IPPC, etc.) and technologies into practical outputs driving the development.

Second, I will promote quick response capacity from FAO headquarters.

If elected, **I will designate task-force staff in the Office of Director-General** to oversee emergency response, and coordinate resources of all departments to address major and urgent needs of Member Countries.

I will put in place coordination mechanism for emergency response and ensure FAO stay target-oriented for rapid assembly of specialized forces worldwide and identify the most applicable and most effective solutions for Member Countries in need.

I will set up time-bound requirements for response to make sure that general requests by Member Countries are addressed within one month, and a DDG or ADG will be authorized for direct coordination of response to major concerns of Member Countries.

I will also instruct FAO's decentralized offices at regional, sub-regional and country levels to diligently fulfill their duties for timely report on concerns of Member Countries.

Third, I will improve FAO's human resources management.

I will manage FAO's mid-and-senior positions by following the 4P

parameters (position, personality, performance and payment), and make sure those existing staff who have worked hard and well will be promoted. Global recruitment shall be prioritized to tackle under-representation of countries and regions. Geographic and position rotations shall be considered to give full play to the initiatives and mutual complementarity of staff with different specialties.

I will reform performance evaluation and application of its results. KPI and other instruments will be used to foster a more driven and active staff team with greater loyalty to the Organization and a stronger sense of purpose.

I will be committed to the career development of FAO staff. Capable employees will undertake more demanding tasks, or be posted to tougher regions or positions to tap into their potentials and build their experiences.

Young people represent the future of FAO, and also future of global agriculture. I will work with Member Countries to focus on the issues of employment of young people, foster young generation of farmers, especially young farmers with technical, business and management expertise. I will create an FAO talent pool with Member Countries for joint cultivation of management and technical personnel with extensive knowledge from multiple posts. I will offer an H-Channel system to cultivate and promote young people and assist them to accumulate various experiences. The **Youth Commission** will be established under DDG to support the career development of young employees, respond to their concerns, and share experience with Member Countries on youth-related work.

Across the globe, **women** have become the pillar in agricultural labor force, making huge contribution to agricultural development and rural revitalization in political, economic, cultural, and family dimensions. I will foster gender balance and equality in the FAO system and global food and agriculture sector, and facilitate gender mainstreaming. The **Women Commission** will be formed under DDG to listen to female employees' concerns, protect their rights and interests, and look after their development. I will strive to increase the proportion of women among mid-and-senior level staff to 50 percent. Meanwhile, **I will have zero tolerance for sexual harassment and power abuse and will strengthen policies to investigate in whistleblower complaints and prevent**

improper behaviors based on the rule of law and regulations.

I will take care of all employees' reasonable welfare, starting with things within my capacity, to ensure a motivated, happy and proud staff team.

Fourth, I will strengthen transparency in FAO.

FAO is an international organization owned by Member Countries, and the Secretariat, mandated by Member Countries, should report to Member Countries. If elected, as the No.1 servant of the Secretariat, I will lead the Organization to operate according to our mandates and established rules and procedures, in a professional, science-based and appropriate way.

I will consult Member Countries and Governing Bodies prior to making any major decisions.

I will introduce third party to assess major decisions and programs, and take effective measures to address any problems and gaps afterwards.

I will strengthen regular interactions with Member Countries. I plan to hold free talks in Rome before every summer and Christmas holiday with ambassadors and delegates of Member Countries, where I will lead the FAO Management to listen to your concerns, suggestions and inputs.

I am firm-minded and approachable with a strong sense of responsibility. I'm also an open-minded person who respects science, follows good advices, and works with a democratic management style. I will build links with staff of all levels through diverse channels and make FAO a big family that is united, efficient, energetic and practical, where everyone is equal.

Fifth, I will foster synergy with partners.

As FAO is a specialized agency of the UN system, **I will first align FAO with the reform and management policies of UN,** facilitate closer collaboration with other UN agencies and international organizations based in New York, Geneva and Nairobi, and in particular, enhance coordination with WFP and IFAD, so that the RBAs are not only working collaboratively on programming, but also at the country and project levels, thus becoming Real Brotherhood Allies.

I will boost synergy between FAO and other international development agencies, including UNDP for joint contribution to SDGs.

I will strengthen coordination with private sectors (Bayer, Alibaba, etc.) and civil society (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, etc.) to leverage their unique roles and expertise.

I will also reinforce synergy among the headquarters, regional, sub-regional and country offices of FAO, making FAO an agency of team spirit that is close to Member Countries, the field and farmers. I will promote the flow of information and resources across the decentralized network, enhance information sharing and coordinated operations, and build an Organization of shared commitment and collective actions in delivering its vision and missions.

Sixth, I will effectively scale up resource mobilization.

Without resources, any blueprints or action plans will only stay on paper. Human beings cannot survive without Vitamins. Nor can an organization do without Vitamin M, M for money. For FAO, making the cake bigger is more urgent than sharing the cake.

I will designate a DDG responsible for resource mobilization, and set up a strong team to design major programs, actions and new approaches of resource mobilization with new ideas and measures.

I will provide timely report on FAO's new strategies, initiatives and conceptions to Member Countries to seek your understanding and voluntary contribution.

I will also forge new platforms for financing cooperation with private sectors and NGOs to support global food and agriculture governance and delivery of SDGs.

More importantly, **I will explore innovative use of funding, and expand partnerships** with the World Bank, other banks and specialized financial institutions to leverage more investment by using donations and catalyst seed funds.

All resources will be used efficiently and in compliance with rules, so as to win trust and credibility from donors and attract more voluntary contributions.

Meanwhile, to facilitate the SDGs, **I will enhance the preparation of a high-level meeting** to marshal strong supports of Member Countries and other stakeholders, consolidate political willingness and commitment.

I promise that, if elected, I will work tirelessly with you to increase FAO's resource mobilization by 10% every year!

Honorable Ministers and Delegates,

FAO is at a critical turning point and calls for an outstanding Director-General who has strong scientific and professional background, rich experience in policy making and implementation, extensive networks and outreach, good knowledge of situations and concerns of developing nations in agricultural and rural development, insights in bottlenecks of developed and middle-income countries, various experiences on different positions of leadership, and the persistence to lead FAO to tackle challenges.

There is no doubt that the sun will rise from the East tomorrow, and you will select the best to make new history.

I am ready to serve you all!

Vote for me! I will devote myself for the entire world to build a dynamic FAO for a better world!

Thank you very much! Shukran! Xiexie! Merci! Spaseeba! And Mucho Gracias!