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(Full Text of Statement)

Statement at the occasion of the Opening Session

(“Setting the Stage”)

41st Plenary Meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Rome, 13 October 2014

Prof. Per Pinstrup-Andersen

Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the
High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition

Ms Chairman, Ambassador Verburg
Members of the Bureau and Advisory Group of the CFS
Excellencies,
Director-General of FAO, Dr Jose Graziano Da Silva
UN Secretary-General representative, Dr Thomas Gass
Vice-President of IFAD, Dr Michel Mordasini
Executive Director of WFP, Dr Ertharin Cousin
Honorable Ministers,
Honorable Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It an honor and a pleasure for me to address for the first time the Committee as Chair of the Steering Committee of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. It is now five years since the CFS reform, which created the HLPE. The previous Steering Committee headed by Prof Swaminathan, initiated the work on the reports published this year.

These reports will be presented later today on behalf of the HLPE by the Project Team Leaders. Permit me to spend a few minutes, mentioning some of the key messages.

Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition

For fisheries and aquaculture, it is truly a wake-up call for the international community working on food security: Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and what they produce, are critically important to any research, debate and action to reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition, and to improve diet diversity, and to reduce micronutrient deficiencies, one of the most critical problems we are facing today. **Therefore, fish deserves more attention in food and nutrition security policies. And at the same time, food security and nutrition dimensions deserve more attention in fisheries and ocean policies.** We have to work together across these sectorial boundaries. The report contains a comprehensive analysis showing why this is the case, and proposes a way forwards for all relevant stakeholder groups, on a range of issues related to the development of aquaculture, trade, social protection, gender and governance, etc.

Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems

Let me now turn to the other report, namely the one on food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems. As you know, the zero hunger challenge launched in 2012 by the Secretary General of the UN during the Rio+20 conference integrates targets of zero-food-loss-and-waste and 100%-sustainable-food-systems.

Food and nutrition security and sustainable food systems are complex and highly interrelated. We dedicated a specific effort to conceptualize the relations between the two. **There can be no Food security and good nutrition, short and long term, without Sustainable food systems.** And, as the FAO Director General has said, there can be no sustainable development without food security and good nutrition. The two are so eminently linked. This is why food security and nutrition, and sustainable food systems are so important in the Post-2015 agenda. Something, I hope, we will be talking about tomorrow.

Food losses and waste provides an “easy-to-grasp” entry point on the unsustainability of food systems. The issue speaks to the public, has attracted wide media as well as political attention. But the issue is complex. Our report aims at proposing a practical way forward for all stakeholders to understand the context-specific and often inter-related causes of FLW, to assess and adapt potential solutions, and to agree on a way forward together to implement these solutions.

Note on Critical and Emerging Issues

Last October, you asked us to work out a note on critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition. We devised what we feel is an innovative scientific process for that. I am glad that the note will be presented to you on Wednesday by the HLPE Vice-Chair, Ms Rahmanian, who was also Vice-Chair in the first HLPE Steering Committee and who has been my mentor during my first year as HLPE Chair. We hope this note will be useful to your work.

Water and Food Security

Let me turn on what we are currently working on, namely the report on water and food security. That work is currently underway. It will be ready for your discussions at next year meeting. Scientists are generally reluctant to put unfinished work under public scrutiny and critics: “Just leave us alone until we finish the research and then we will tell you what we found”. We do not feel that way in the HLPE. We believe scientific inclusiveness and openness is critical to the quality of the final product. So we ask for inputs from the knowledge base and from anybody who care to work with us. The draft water report is currently posted on our website for comments and suggestions from the wider knowledge community. It is not too late to contribute for those who have not done so. At our meeting next month in Buenos Aires, we will carefully consider the comments and suggestions of this consultation.

After one year of work at the head of the HLPE, I realize how special and important an institution the HLPE is. I can praise the HLPE because the good work was done before I joined, so it is not a conflict of interest. Its design, for which I can take no credit whatsoever, not only facilitates the generation of science-based evidence important for decision-making. It does it by including all relevant and interested knowledge-holders and groups, many of whom would have often very different perspectives and points of view, to help build a common understanding. **I believe HLPE reports are thus very special reports.** The work of the HLPE is an open, collective scientific undertaking. It also implies a tremendous workload under great time pressure particularly for our Secretariat headed by Vincent Gitz.

The HLPE is 100% extra-budgetary funded, including translation costs. We thank our donors and hope the interest of partners will grow in the future to enable the work. We believe that the HLPE and its products are increasingly known and partake to the overall impact of the CFS. And this is a message we are getting back from you.

Madam Chair, in concluding: achieving a hunger free world, sustainable food security and good nutrition for all, is both our duty and our common goal. There are many contexts and a diversity of approaches, as we see in our reports, but we believe that there is a fundamental unity of purpose. This is why we try our best to produce solution-oriented, policy-oriented and practical reports. We sincerely hope the two Reports and the Note we are presenting this year will support the CFS in its noble ambition, to achieve now this common goal. I also hope that you will consult our earlier 6 reports all of which are still relevant and timely for the policy debate. There is a tendency to put the reports on the shelves once they have been discussed. Please go back take another look. All of these reports are still very relevant.

Thank you very much Madam Chair and to all members and participants of the CFS for your encouragement and support.