



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

**FAO Regional Conference for Africa**

**ZERO HUNGER EVENT**

Statement by Mr. José Graziano da Silva,  
FAO Director-General

Khartoum, February 2018

1. It is an honor to welcome all of you to this special event.
2. Today we are gathered to highlight and reinforce our commitment to Zero Hunger.
3. It is unacceptable that people continue to suffer from hunger in a world of plenty, in a world that produces more than enough to feed everyone.
4. Achieving zero hunger is a fundamental condition to sustainable development.
5. This is the rationale behind the Malabo Declaration to end hunger in Africa by 2025.
6. And also behind the Sustainable Development Goal number 2 to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

7. There is a difference in relation to the target-year to eradicate hunger. Malabo Declaration says 2025, and SDG 2 says 2030. The sooner the better.
8. But please also note that SDG 2 refers not only to hunger, but to all forms of malnutrition, including overweight and obesity.

Excellencies,

9. As you know, the number of hungry people in the world increased in 2016, after more than 10 years of decline.
10. Sub-Saharan Africa was one of the most affected regions. In 2016, 23% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa suffered from hunger. This means almost 1 in 4 people.

11. The situation is particularly worrisome in Eastern Africa, where 34% of the population suffered from chronic undernourishment in 2016.
12. Rising conflicts, the impacts of climate change and economic slowdowns were the major drivers behind the increase of hunger in 2016.
13. Even some countries that have been successful at reducing food insecurity faced a setback, especially due to prolonged drought caused by the impacts of El Niño.
14. This means that a high degree of vulnerability to risks and threats still looms large on Africa's food and agriculture systems.
15. But I firmly believe that 2016 was a point outside the curve, and not a reversal tendency.
16. FAO's main priority in 2018 is to bring the fight against hunger back on track.

17. Just some weeks ago, FAO co-organized a high-level meeting on Zero Hunger during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa.
18. We had the presence of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres; the president of Guinea and chair of the African Union, Alpha Conde; the former President of Nigeria Dr. Obasajo; the Prime-Minister of Ethiopia; Dr. Hailemariam Desalegn; the AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Ms. Josefa Sacko, and many other authorities.
19. Former Brazilian President Lula was also invited. He was prevented from traveling, but sent a video-message.
20. We have elaborated this publication that contains the proceedings of the event in Addis, in order to guide the debate in this Regional Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. We have reasons to be optimistic that the numbers on hunger will go down again.
22. Let me mention three factors:
23. **First**, the UN System led by Secretary General Guterres is reinforcing its actions towards maintaining peace and addressing the effects of conflicts on vulnerable people.
24. **Second**, the Green Climate Fund is already operational to finance developing countries to address climate change. And FAO is already supporting many Countries to elaborate projects to present to the Green Climate Fund.
25. And **third**, there are strong signs that the world economy is recovering. This will create favorable conditions for development.

26. Now we have to take concrete measures in the right direction.
27. We at FAO, advocate that the cornerstone of the fight against hunger must be to increase the resilience of rural livelihoods to conflicts and the impacts of climate change.
28. Even in the worst conditions, we have to invest in local food production by combining humanitarian assistance and development actions.
29. Social protection programmes are an invaluable instrument in this regard, especially in rural areas, where most of the poor live, and where formal social security systems are nonexistent.
30. As I have said many times, we cannot stop a drought from happening; but we can avoid a drought from becoming a famine.

31. Linking productive investments with social protection schemes can create virtuous cycles of local development.
32. This benefits the most vulnerable: women, children, youth and the elderly.
33. Local food purchase from family farming is a very good example of social policy that has been implemented in several countries, as well as cash transfer programmes.

Excellencies,

34. This event is a great opportunity for us to discuss the implementation of national strategies, evaluate the obstacles ahead, and figure out how to overcome them.
35. We are going to promote events like this in all FAO Regional Conferences.



36. Zero Hunger will also be the theme of the World Food Day in October.
37. And we are planning to organize a big event in Bangkok in November, together with IFPRI.
38. It is time to redouble our efforts, and push for political commitment and timely concrete actions such as never seen before.
39. Zero hunger is attainable. It depends upon us.
40. Let's do our best to become the Zero Hunger Generation.

Thank you for your attention.