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Food and
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Продовольственная и
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Organización
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para la
Alimentación y la
Agricultura

FAO Regional Conference for Africa

TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Tunis, Tunisia, 24-28 March 2014

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE 27th CONFERENCE

Your Excellency Mr Head of Government of the Republic of Tunisia,
Your Excellency Mr Minister of Agriculture of Tunisia,
Your Excellency Mr Independent Chairperson of the Council,
Your Excellency Mr Director-General of FAO,
Your Excellencies Ministers,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Agencies based in Rome,
Honourable Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Twenty-seventh FAO Regional Conference for Africa was held in Brazzaville, in the Republic of the Congo, from 23 to 27 April 2012. In his inaugural address, the President of the Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr Denis SASSOU NGUESSO, drew attention to the challenges of food security in Sub-Saharan Africa and stressed the need for public investments to create the necessary conditions for promoting a dynamic agricultural economy.

In addition, calling for effective solidarity, the President of the Republic of the Congo emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnerships to enhance food security in the Africa region. Two years later, these challenges continue to face us as the food situation in Africa remains of concern. Africa now has more than one billion inhabitants, with a population increasing by more than 2.5 percent per year while growth in agricultural production lags behind population growth.

The FAO report on food insecurity notes that Sub-Saharan Africa is the region where the prevalence of undernutrition remains high, despite modest advances made in recent years. Significant efforts are therefore still needed to *create the necessary conditions to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*.

In this context and on the occasion of this 28th FAO Regional Conference for Africa, I have the signal honour of presenting to you the results of follow-up to the recommendations during

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the Congolese term of office as Chair. As Chairperson of the 27th Conference I have spared no effort during the 2012-2013 biennium and from the period April 2012 to March 2014, thus enacting the firm desire of the Republic of the Congo to collaborate with FAO and the Member States, to find solutions to the problems that are hampering agricultural development in Africa.

This desire for collaboration has taken the form of meetings, discussions and talks that I have had in Rome, Accra, Addis Ababa, Abidjan and Brazzaville, respectively with the Group of African Permanent Representatives to FAO, the FAO Regional Director for Africa, the African Ministers responsible for the rural sector and with the Director-General of FAO for periodic evaluations of the recommendations of the 27th Regional Conference.

Thanks to the monitoring mechanisms put in place by FAO, evaluation of these recommendations indicates the progress that has been made in the following areas:

- The Strategic Thinking Process launched by the Director-General of FAO which led to the new strategic framework endorsed by the Conference of FAO in June 2013, which takes into account the priorities and main challenges of the Africa region.
- Expansion of the agricultural productivity scope to forestry, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture and increased attention to the value chain approach, water management and climate change regarding the regional priorities for the 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 biennia approved by the 27th Regional Conference.
- The increase in 2012 and 2013 of the field programme budget and the allocation of funds to the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to address regional priorities.
- The approval of results-based management (RBM) pilot projects to develop the cassava and maize value chains in a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach.
- The strengthening of liaison functions with regional economic communities and the African Union.
- The ongoing FAO decentralization projects approved by the 27th Conference based on the creation of more flexible and innovative technical hubs.
- The establishment of needs-oriented typologies of country office models and consideration of additional factors beyond per capita income.
- The integration of emergency and development programmes endorsed by the 27th Regional Conference and the transfer of authority and human and financial resources to the Regional Office for Africa, the sub-regional offices and the FAO country representations.
- Assessment of the CAADP process and facilitation of cross country peer learning.
- FAO support to countries, regional economic communities and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in the formulation and implementation of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).
- Support for policy and budget reviews, institutional strengthening and forging innovative financing partnerships.
- The increase by countries of budgetary allocations to catalytic public investments and acceleration of the policy and regulatory reforms needed to attract private sector investment.

The CAADP, which is aimed at enhancing and promoting agriculture throughout Africa, was designed in the framework of NEPAD in July 2003. Since 2007, when Rwanda was the first

country to sign the compact, forty (40) countries have signed, including ten (10) during the course of the 2012-2013 biennium:

- Twenty-eight (28) countries have formulated investment plans, including three (3) during the 2012-2013 biennium.
- Twenty-four (24) countries have reached the « *Business meeting held* » stage, including seven (7) during the 2012-2013 biennium.
- Two sub-regional bodies (ECOWAS or CDEAO in 2009 and ECCAS or CEEAC in 2013) have signed the compact and have an investment plan.

Monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the 27th Regional Conference also indicates progress made in other areas, including:

- Greater integration of producer and civil society organizations and the private sector (in particular small producers, women and youth) in the CAADP formulation and implementation process and a strengthening of their capacities.
- Closer attention to gender issues in the planning and implementation of programmes.
- FAO support to governments in the creation of financial and regulatory environments to enable public-private partnerships (PPPs) and in the mainstreaming of such partnerships into national strategies, planning and investment policies, including the CAADP investment frameworks.
- The provision of more detailed, analytical and disaggregated information on PPPs, especially for small producers, women and youth.
- The facilitated development of food security and nutrition mapping systems.
- The official launching of the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security, endorsed by the 27th Regional Conference for Africa, took place in June 2013 in Rome as part of the 38th Session of the Conference of FAO. Contributions to date amount to more than 40 million USD, with the two main donors being Equatorial Guinea and Angola. Its Steering Committee has approved six (6) country programmes and action plans (Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger and South Sudan) and a West Africa programme comprising five (5) countries which should serve to galvanize efforts to eradicate hunger, reduce malnutrition and combat poverty.
- The election of Mr NGIRWA as Independent Chairperson of the Council also represented a high moment of exemplary solidarity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations of the 27th Regional Conference is encouraging. However, more needs to be done to consolidate or build upon the results achieved and to generalize essential progress in the near future in order to meet the food and nutrition challenges of the African continent.

From the platform where I have observed the unfolding of the fight against food insecurity in Africa, I suggest that the Member States and FAO come together in deep reflection on strengthening agricultural financing capacities in Africa, associating political will and a negation of global hypocrisy, so that the right to food or food sovereignty can find its new frontiers in Africa.

The year 2014 is both for the United Nations the year of family farming and for the African Union the year of agriculture and food security. The year 2014 could therefore herald such an essential change of course.

In conclusion, I seize this opportunity to renew, on behalf of His Excellency Mr Denis SASSOU NGUESSO President of the Republic of the Congo and of his Government, our profound gratitude for the overwhelming participation of Member States at the Regional Conference in Brazzaville and above all for the quality of its results.

As I hand over the baton to my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Tunisia, I have the honour to express the most heartfelt commendations of the Republic of the Congo to the Government of the Host Country and to the Tunisian people for the organization of this 28th Conference.

I should also like to convey my gratitude to the Director-General of FAO, my friend Doctor José GRAZIANO DA SILVA, for his competence and dedication in directing our organization.

I should like to make a special mention of the Group of African Permanent Representatives to FAO, a group with which I have had many fruitful discussions and whose invaluable contributions and priceless affection have had a remarkable impact on the exercise of my mandate.

I should also like to thank my colleague Ministers responsible for the rural sector in Africa for their support and their unconditional collaboration. Having been at the forefront for the last two years, I know just how important their respective contributions have been in achieving the current results, in particular the state of follow-up to the recommendations of the 27th Conference which you will find detailed in the corresponding report.

I wish every success to the 28th FAO Regional Conference for Africa.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.

Rigobert MABOUNDOU,
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock/Republic of the Congo
Chairperson of the 27th FAO Regional Conference for Africa