CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

14th Session

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 19 - 22 September 2016

SPEECH BY MRS AWILO OCHIENG PERNET,
CHAIRPERSON CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Vanuatu,

Honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Acting Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Forestries, Fisheries and Biosecurity,

Honourable Minister of Health,

Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Papua New Guinea,

Distinguished Representatives of the FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat,

Distinguished Participants of the 14th session of the CCNASWP,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great privilege and honour for me to be here with you today in Port Vila, the capital city of the wonderful Pacific Island Country of Vanuatu. This is my first time to visit Vanuatu and I would like to thank the Government of Vanuatu, the Codex Contact Point of Vanuatu and the CCNASWP Regional Coordinator for the very warm welcome that has been extended to me and for their kind hospitality.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, when I took up my leadership position as Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2014, the Codex Alimentarius Commission had 186 Members. Two years later today, this number has increased to 188 Codex Members. Indeed, the CAC is truly a global and international organization, which represents more than 99% of the world's consumers. However, it is not only about numbers. We must ensure the effective participation of all Codex Members in Codex work, especially those from developing countries. We must also strive to ensure that the national Codex structures in developing countries are strengthened. The CCNASWP Region has 14 Member Countries *(Australia, Canada, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, The Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, The United States of America and Vanuatu).* I noted that ten (10) South-West Pacific Region countries are listed in the table of the countries eligible for support from the new Codex Trust Fund (CTF2). I would therefore like to encourage the eligible countries to make full use of the CTF2 in order to strengthen Codex in their countries by implementing either individual or group projects.

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the FAO, WHO, bilateral and international development partners for all the Codex and food safety capacity building initiatives carried out in the CCNASWP Region. I have been informed that Pacific Island Countries are also supporting each other in south-south cooperation arrangements. I congratulate you on the implementation of these south-south cooperation projects to promote Codex and food safety in your rRgion and I hope that your model will serve as an inspiration to developing countries in other Codex Regions.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, all countries in the CCNASWP Region are involved in the food trade either as food producers for the domestic market, food exporters and/or as food importers. While it is acknowledged that agricultural production can lead to the creation of wealth and accelerated economic growth, in order to have access to food markets, food must be safe. Therefore, the effective implementation of Codex standards is of paramount importance to achieving that objective.

Indeed, Codex plays a key role by providing an internationally harmonised food safety and quality framework on which countries can build to ensure food safety. The effective implementation of food safety and quality standards not only ensures the protection of consumers' health, but it also enables access of national food products to regional and international markets.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, on 25th September 2015 during the UN Sustainable Development Summit held in New York, world leaders adopted a set of seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet and to ensure prosperity for all.

The six SDGs which are directly related to Codex' mandate are:

SDG 1: No poverty

SDG 2: Zero hunger

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

At the 72nd session of the Codex Executive Committee (CCEXEC) which took place in Geneva from 30th August to 1st September 2016, I proposed to the Executive Committee to have a sub-item on the Agenda of the 73rd CCEXEC session related to Codex and the SDGs. I am pleased to inform you that my proposal was accepted by the CCEXEC. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to countries of your Region to actively contribute to the discussions on Codex and the SDGs both at the CEXEC and the Codex Alimentarius Commission sessions.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I call upon you all to continue your Codex and food safety advocacy work as it is indeed important to raise the profile of food safety in your Region and world-wide. Ensuring food safety should be high on the political agenda in each country. In addition, we should work hard to increase the visibility of Codex and we should strive to raise awareness about the importance of Codex and food safety amongst all relevant stakeholders including policy and decision makers, competent authorities, primary food producers, food processors and retailers, food handlers including street-food vendors and consumers.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I sincerely appreciate your commitment to Codex food safety and quality work and I am grateful for all your efforts to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

I wish you a very successful CCNASWP session.

Thank you for your attention!