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Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Iraq

In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate. Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a source of pleasure to speak on behalf of the Government and people of Iraq in this 38th Session of FAO and to wish you all the success in this very important and vital Conference.

I would like to commend in particular the Director-General who has proved throughout his excellent management over the last two years that he is up to the expectations and that he has led this Organization towards reform that has been included in the Reviewed Strategic Framework.

We would like to commend the fact that FAO represents the common will of Member Nations regardless of the size and location. FAO aims at implementing certain visions, programs and strategies that are subject to the approval of its Member Nations. We commend the transparency and efficiency in enabling Member Nations to participate, to combat hunger and poverty in the world.

We believe that FAO undertakes a very positive role at the international arena to achieve the Millennium Goal and eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Mr. President, Iraq has always been an active Member of FAO as of its inception and we are still keen to be very active in the various activities of FAO be it international or regional. We had the honor of presiding over the 31st FAO Regional Conference for Near East.

Iraq, in spite of the well-known difficulties that it faces, has been able to make progress and looks towards further technical cooperation with FAO to achieve more production in food production and food security.

Food security in Iraq is an objective that can be achieved and we can achieve that very swiftly. We have indeed increased the production of various agricultural and animal food products. We are producing what we need in the market in terms of vegetation and vegetables. We are also covering agricultural production throughout the year. We have made improvements in the production of grains and the Ministry has supported irrigation systems that cover three million hectares and that aim at the increase of wheat to three million tons in spite of the shortage of water resources given the fact that we have irregular access to water from the neighboring countries and the climate changes that have overstruck the region.

We are planning on having self-sufficiency in wheat production over the coming three years. We are adopting effective procedures to arrest desertification that presents a major threat to Iraq. In our Ministry we have a special department to combat desertification that undertakes pilot projects on the ridges of the desert under very dire climate conditions. However, we need regional procedures as well to reduce that threat.

We call upon FAO to set up greenbelts around cities and fertile and arable lands in order to be able to coordinate all efforts to combat desertification and to create job opportunities for the rural populations.

We have also made efforts to stem rural migration by building up modern villages for the modern graduates in agriculture. We are three thousand new graduates who will get grants and assistance from the Government in terms of housing and agricultural lots.

In addition to acclimatizing ourselves with the new climate conditions and the development of the human and financial resources in Iraq, we are also focusing on creating legislative framework that would enable the agriculture to prosper in Iraq after the fact that our State was extremely centralized in the past. We are turning towards decentralization with the provision of incentives, guarantees and support small scale farmers and investors in the private sector through a sort of program that is supported by the Government of Iraq which is the Government letting fund.

I would like to thank you for your attention.