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Review of the State of Food and Agriculture:  
Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition

**Country Statement**

**The Honorable PROCESO J. ALCALA**

Secretary of Agriculture  
Republic of the Philippines

17 June 2013

His Excellency, the Director General Jose Graziano Da Silva

His Excellency, the Chairman of this Conference, Minister Mohammad Azef Rahimi of Afghanistan

The Independent Chairman of the Council, Mr. Luc Guyo

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to welcome and congratulate our ASEAN brothers – Singapore and Brunei – and South Sudan, who have joined our noble Organization.

This Conference's theme: Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition is very timely as we prepare for an assessment 20 years after the International Conference on Nutrition.

The Philippines, just like the rest of the world, is still faced with the problem of undernutrition among Filipino children 0-10 years old and other population groups, including pregnant women and lactating mothers. The official figures have not improved for nearly 2 decades based on the latest survey undertaken by my government.

The persistence of hunger and undernutrition must be a cause for serious concern that should continue to disturb our collective conscience.

For this reason, the first and foremost Strategic Objective of this Organization is to contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

These three scourges of mankind are interconnected. They feed on each other like cancer.

In order to solve the nutritional problem of our country, and also of the world, it is necessary to produce the food needed to feed our people.

This is what we are committed to do in my country. For the past three years, we have pursued our Food Staples Sufficiency Program, centered on rice production. However, we are also promoting other staple foods such as corn, bananas, sweet potato, and other traditional root crops.

Because land is a limited resource, the way to increase production to meet the demands of our people is to increase productivity by using high yielding seed varieties, expanding irrigation, improving post harvest facilities, and building farm to market roads.

My government has invested heavily in these strategic agricultural infrastructures for the past three years. Today, the Philippines is practically self sufficient in rice and corn.

For this reason, we are celebrating 2013 as our National Year of the Rice so that our countrymen may be aware of our food security and nutritional condition.

Very appropriately in this national year of rice, the FAO project being exhibited in the Atrium is the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems. This project is making strides in the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Ifugao Rice Terraces located in Northern Philippines.

After around 40 years, we have exported the first shipment of fancy rice varieties, as well as corn silage.

Mindful of the effects of climate change, we are developing, a rice variety which will be saline tolerant, drought resistant, submersible, nutritious and delicious at the same time.

Food self sufficiency, does not mean zero imports. In today's globalized economy, we have to consider our international trading commitments.

It is for this reason that my country believes that the spirit of the Doha Development Agenda has to move forward. This year's 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Bali should build on the Doha Round.

The walls of trade-distorting domestic support and export subsidies have to be torn down so that developing countries like the Philippines have a fair chance to improve ourselves through our engagement in the world market economy.

This is the first FAO Conference for our new Director General Jose Graziano Da Silva. He has inherited a much more complicated world food situation now than it had been 18 years ago. In order to solve this, I believe that he has to be given the resources to propel this Organization to fulfill its mission of eradicating world hunger and promoting food security. My country supports the Program of Work and Budget for 2014 – 2015 requested by the His Excellency, the Director General.

For the past several years, this Organization had been locked in an intense soul searching. The resulting reforms that have transformed this Organization are already in place and it is time to move on. It is now time to walk the talk.

This Organization should be brought back to the farmers. The way this can be done is to decentralize the FAO further and provide the regions and country offices the resources and authority to do so.

Next year, we will be celebrating the International Year of Family Farming. I believe this should be the occasion for all of us to see to it that farming remains a profitable option for our people, particularly the small holders.

Last year, we adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure. This is another landmark code of practice among member countries as we try to preserve a basic asset for our peoples – land.

Next year, we hope to approve a set of Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment which will balance the needs of our people and the interest of the investors.

Clearly, there is a lot more work for the Committee on World Food Security. With our support and the support of other stakeholders, we look forward to the day when the number of hungry and malnourished can be drastically reduced, if not eliminated.

Thank you very much. Have a good day. Mabuhay po kayo!