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Excellences, Chairperson, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be representing my country – Malta for this 39th session of the FAO Conference, a Conference that deals with issues that are of utmost importance for the global population and that are of direct importance to the Mediterranean region we form part of. Food security and the social deprivation highlighted in the SOFA report is a serious issue in the Mediterranean region in particular to the southern eastern basin. The relationship between lack of food availability and political instability is known all too well, and risks aggravating a spiral of misery that is causing hardship, deprivation and death, and contributing to the terrible tragedies at sea which the world witnessed this year.

This has caused the re-emergence of issues pertaining to food security on the international agenda, and the choice of exploring the links between the need to address social action through food security and agricultural policies at this Conference could not have come at a more opportune moment.

I strongly believe a well-developed agricultural sector is pivotal in improving the quality of life in rural and remote communities and that this can contribute to breaking the cycle of rural poverty and hunger. This can be achieved by strengthening rural resilience which is crucial to break the vicious cycle of rural poverty and hunger.

The strengthening of rural resilience can not only break the poverty and hunger cycle but also provide the means for economic and social development. Development programs that are well targeted are a key element in this, and as a member state of the European Union I also welcome and support the efforts made in this direction. Strengthen rural resilience also means identifying strategic agricultural productions that are suitable for the territory and that are valued by the market. This goes hand in hand with the dissemination of knowledge on the technology required and agronomic practices needed for the production of strategic products.

It is our responsibility as policy makers to design policies to attract investments in infrastructure that ensures openness to parties willing to participate along the value chain. The challenge of attracting investment for the establishment of such infrastructure remains, especially when the investment will have to ensure that the distribution chain and the production sector are linked together through a system that is attractive to all the actors involved and that the final product reaches the market at a competitive price.

I believe that strong and sustainable agricultural systems can build a stronger social fabric in the countries and regions where the risks are greatest, to the benefit of all. That they can help mitigate the risks of migration and the misery that follows hunger, and to be a solid foundation on which to continue building our shared vision of a peaceful, prosperous and diverse world.