



## **SWAZILAND GOVERNMENT**

### **STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MOSES VILAKATI, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND DURING THE 39<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE FAO CONFERENCE IN ROME, ITALY:**

**6 - 13 JUNE, 2015**

Chairperson

FAO Director General

Honourable Ministers

Executive Officers of International Organisations

Ambassadors

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

May I congratulate you Mr Chairman, for your appointment as Chair and extend my delegation's appreciation in the manner you are conducting your facilitation of this meeting. You can count on us as a delegation from Swaziland in supporting your work. Mr Chairman, sincere gratitude and appreciation is also extended, to the Government and the people of Italy, especially the City of Rome for the warm hospitality since our arrival in this city. We also thank the FAO team for the facilitation of this meeting, which I am very positive, will be a success, thus subsequently providing means to sustainable agricultural development, so as to eradicate the cycle of poverty, of which, Mr Chairman, is in line with this meeting's theme.

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, we congratulate Mr. José Graziano da Silva, for his reappointment as the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, especially at a time when the organisation is attaining 70 years of age. FAO has enacted programs, in our Kingdom, aimed at reducing rural poverty and hunger, which I have been delegated by the King, His Majesty King Mswati 111, and the Swazi government, to extend their gratitude as well as pledge our continuing support, to you Sir and the organization.

Mr Chairman, as we address the theme of breaking the chain of rural poverty, we must acknowledge the challenges faced by the rural population. The analysis is that, issues of climate change, availability and costs of production resources, as well as accessibility to markets, should be addressed, in order to

effectively impact the rural population. Ensuring accessibility to appropriate technology and skills, can be means of dealing with the said challenges. I therefore, challenge the World community, to intensify research on innovative farming techniques and technologies that are enabling to both women and the youth, as they are the majority farmers, in Sub Saharan Africa, Emphasis being on improving agricultural productivity, and making it accessible and affordable, so as to attract more youth farmers.

As part of its social protection programme, since independence, Swaziland has maintained a school feeding programme from primary to high school. Recently, the Government has introduced an input subsidy programme where farmers are subsidised on fertilizer and seeds in addition to a long standing subsidy on tractor hire. Unfortunately the 2014 drought hit the country hard and yields are expected to decrease.

Moving forward, the aggressive implementation of agreed programmes is another way of reaching our goals at FAO. There is a need for us, as an organisation, to review some of the organisation bureaucratic procedures that end up delaying support urgently required by the rural poor. Also, consideration has to be made on the conditions of service, to help retain top quality experts. As an organisation we also need to be more aggressive on resource mobilisation, particularly the private sector.

We also need to consider areas that are not agro conducive. It is in such situations where social programmes must be implemented, to counter the lack of agricultural activities, as means of reducing rural poverty and hunger. While implementing such programs, due diligence must be made to ensure fair play to all stakeholders.

Lastly, Mr Chairman, may I emphasise that the good work FAO is doing in the rural areas of the Kingdom of Swaziland is commendable and appreciated. Again, may I pledge my Government's support to you, Director General, and your organisation. As a country we fully support the Zero Hunger initiative for a Hunger Free World.

I thank you Mr Chairperson.