



## **ZIMBABWE**

**STATEMENT BY HEAD OF DELEGATION AT THE 39<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE FAO CONFERENCE: 6 – 13  
JUNE 2015**

**“BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND HUNGER BY  
STRENGTHENING RURAL RESILIENCE: SOCIAL PROTECTION  
AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:  
ZIMBABWE'S PERSPECTIVE”**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MECHANISATION AND IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT DR J M MADE  
(MP) 2 JUNE 2015**

**Chairperson of the Conference,  
Director General and Staff,  
Representatives of Member States,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Zimbabwe joins other member states in **congratulating** the **Chair** of the **39<sup>th</sup> Conference**, Honourable Le Mamea Ropati Mualia and **his Deputies**, H.E. Claudio Javier Rozenywaig, H.E. Serge Tomasi and H.E. Majid Dehghan-Shoar on **election** to steer the work of this very important meeting. I would like to **commend** you for the **sterling work** you have done thus far.

The Zimbabwe delegation would also want to **congratulate** the **Director General, Dr José Graziano da Silva** for his re-election and also for the excellent work in **agriculture, food and nutrition security** since assuming office.

Turning to the theme of debate – breaking the cycle of poverty and hunger – Chairperson, Zimbabwe is **one** of the countries that are yet to realise the **Millennium Development Goal 1** of halving the proportion of poor people by 2015. With a population of **13 million** people and an average household size of **4** people, **62%** households in Zimbabwe are poor due to a number of factors that are strongly rooted in **climate change** and the **illegal sanctions** imposed on Zimbabwe when the country sought to redistribute land and bring the majority of Zimbabweans into the mainstream economy and form a strong base for inclusive agriculture-led economic growth and recovery.

The Zimbabwe delegation believes that breaking the cycle of poverty and hunger requires:

1. A pro-poor development framework to spearhead inclusive economic growth;
2. A strong focus on rural areas and agriculture development; and

3. A mutual combination of social protection and agricultural development measures

Talking about **inclusive economic growth**, the Zimbabwe economy grew by **10%** in 2012. This growth fell to **5%** and **3.1%** in 2013 and in 2014 respectively resulting in more poverty and hunger. Reversing this trend as a deliberate strategy to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty is central to Zimbabwe's economic development agenda in the post-2015 development era.

Zimbabwe's post-2015 development agenda to stir inclusive economic growth is set out in the National Economic Blueprint – **The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET)** – which is built on four clusters, that clearly answers to the theme of debate. These clusters include:

1. **Food security and nutrition cluster;**
2. **Social services and poverty eradication cluster;**
3. **Infrastructure and utilities cluster;** and
4. **Value addition and beneficiation cluster**

I must say that ZIMASSET is a national programme that demands public, private and development partners' investment alike. And my delegation would want to see more cooperation with FAO in the context of ZIMASSET and the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) (2016) signed in May 2015.

Chairperson, **a strong focus on rural areas and agriculture is key to breaking the cycle of poverty in Zimbabwe** for three main reasons:

1. **67.2%** of Zimbabwe's population **lives in rural areas** and is engaged in agriculture. And noteworthy is the fact that **52%** of this population are women.
2. **Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas** with **76%** of rural households living on less than **\$1.25** per day compared to **38%** in urban areas. **30%** of rural people are living in extreme poverty compared to **5.6%** in urban areas.
3. Agriculture is the major **source of livelihood** for **67%** of the population living in rural areas and **remains the mainstay** of the Zimbabwean economy with potential of contributing up to **18%** of the Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product and **25%** of the country's formal employment.

**A mutual combination of social protection measures and agricultural development measures will enhance Zimbabwe's efforts to break the cycle of poverty:**

The **social protection measures** help the poor and vulnerable to meet their basic needs and manage risks, while **agricultural development measures** create durable pathways out of poverty.

Allow me, Mr Chairperson, to draw parallel experiences of Zimbabwe in respect of input and food distribution. The distribution of **agriculture inputs** such as seed and fertilisers to smallholder farmers across the country has worked very well to build and enhance food security of rural farmers in good rainfall seasons. In 2013-2014 agricultural season, Zimbabwe achieved a cereal food surplus of **253 000 metric tons** against a national requirement of **1 450 000 metric tons**. The same however cannot be said for 2014-

2-15 which experienced a severe drought, particularly in the Southern part of the country. This points to the importance of irrigation in creating resilience.

On **food distribution**, Zimbabwe has on average **16%** of rural households requiring food assistance, especially during period January – March, just a month before we start harvesting a new crop. Food distribution include **free food hand-outs** and **supplementary feeding programmes** for vulnerable groups which include children under five, school-going, pregnant women and the elderly, and **food-for-work** where rural people are engaged to participate in public works programmes such as road repairs and gully reclamation, in return for cash or food.

My delegation regrets to note that most of this food distributed by various agencies is imported. It is our conviction that such imports have only served to perpetuate poverty and hunger by crowding out local value chain players. My delegation supports the notion that, wherever possible, food distribution should be closely tied to local production if we are to get a more pronounced impact on eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

The promotion of **sustainable agriculture development** measures in Zimbabwe is guided by the Zimbabwe Comprehensive Agriculture Policy Framework which is being implemented through the Zimbabwe Agriculture Investment Plan of 2013 – 2018. Zimbabwe is honoured to have FAO, the European Union and World Bank as signatories to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact, committing to resource the investment plan. The ZAIP has now gone through an independent Technical Review (ITR) and preparation for a High Level

Business Meeting is underway. I want to take this opportunity, Mr Chairperson, to invite all development partners to come forward and be part of the Zimbabwe's Investment Plan.

My delegation submits that increased cooperation with FAO to build farmer resilience and increase agriculture production and productivity should focus investment in the following six (6) areas while mainstreaming gender and youth as key participants and beneficiaries of sustainable agriculture development:

1. **Conservation Agriculture:** The rate of adoption of conservation farming remains low due to low levels of mechanisation.
2. **Rehabilitation and modernisation** of non-functional irrigation schemes and **development of new irrigation** to increase resilience in the face of climate change. Zimbabwe has potential to irrigate **2 million hectares** but currently only has **220,000 hectares** installed with irrigation out of which **153,000 hectares** are functional.
3. **Development and use of drought tolerant, diseases and pest-resistant and high yielding and early maturing varieties** in order to promote resilience whilst increasing production and productivity.
4. **Strengthening National Early Warning Systems** to improve monitoring of food security and nutrition at household and national level.
5. **Improvement in post-harvest storage, handling and processing facilities.** Post-harvest losses account for **20 to 25%** of food losses from the field to table.
6. **Animal health, disease control and genetic conservation and development** to increase livestock production and productivity.

My delegation would like to conclude by expressing its gratitude at the on-going cooperation with FAO in the following key areas that resonate well with Zimbabwe's development agenda – ZIMASSET:

1. **Smallholder irrigation support** in Manicaland, Midlands and Masvingo provinces which constitute most of the southern part of Zimbabwe;
2. **Strengthening** of agriculture, food and nutrition security **coordination mechanisms** and **policy environment**;
3. **Enhancing Agriculture productivity and nutrition** under the Livelihoods and Food Security Programme.
4. **Animal health, disease control and genetic conservation and development** to increase livestock production and productivity.

My delegation is particularly happy with the participation of the rural poor in the identification and implementation of interventions. Such active participatory planning processes will enhance impact by identifying the right and ensuring full local ownership of interventions.

We want to acknowledge and thank the **Director General's vision** in decentralising operations of FAO to regions. The strategy is beginning to bear fruits in building resilience and more is possible if more resources are channelled to regional operations.

**Thank You**