

**Statement delivered by
His Excellency Frank Carruet
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Belgium to FAO
on the occasion of the
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)
26 June 2019**

Ministers and Secretaries of State,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Belgium congratulates Dr Qu Dongyu's election as Director-General and wishes him every success in his new duties. Belgium is looking forward to collaborate with him to achieve a world with Zero Hunger. We thank Mr Graziano da Silva for his commitment throughout the past 8 years.

Belgium applauds FAO for choosing the central theme of the 41st Conference, which is devoted to the coherence between migration, agriculture and rural development. Migration should be a choice, not a necessity. International cooperation should address the structural drivers of large movements of people and create conditions that allow communities to live in peace and prosperity in their homelands. Belgium emphasizes the important role that FAO can play in addressing the root causes of internal and international migration and displacement and in harnessing the developmental potential of migration, especially in terms of food security and poverty reduction.

The contribution of returning migrants to rural areas can be enhanced by providing a conducive environment for business and investment and supporting migrants' integration into local labour markets. Therefore, the Belgian Development Cooperation drastically shifted the focus towards the promotion of sustainable entrepreneurship in agriculture. From keeping farmers alive we switched to supporting farmers as entrepreneurs in society. In this regard, the empowerment of farmers, especially women and girls whose role as a dynamic actor should not be forgotten, is crucial. As food security continues to be a major threat in Africa, we stress the importance of sustainable development in the least developed African countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

FAO is a longstanding and important partner for Belgium. There are many areas where Belgium's and FAO's development visions align, especially the shared belief in agriculture's unique position as a catalyst for rural development, job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable growth.

In the last biennium Belgium has deepened its engagement with FAO in a number of notable ways, including through a framework agreement signed in 2016. Furthermore, Belgium had very fruitful and results-focused bilateral consultations with FAO and WFP last December, including a joint session with the two organizations. This resulted in a concrete action plan to strengthen and deepen our future collaboration in view of reaching the SDG targets. In this regard, we want to emphasize the rights of those who are left behind, for instance vulnerable people living in remote rural areas.

Furthermore, Belgium would like to stress that, if we want to achieve the Agenda 2030, the inclusion of the private sector and new ways of financing are key. We count on FAO to provide us with special knowledge and good practices concerning the development of a dynamic private sector within the agricultural sector.

To conclude, Belgium is proud to be one of the top ten FAO bilateral donors for voluntary contributions. Belgium always chooses the modalities that allow FAO to work in the most efficient way possible: multi-year commitment in the form of unrestricted voluntary contributions through the Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) and contributions to the FAO Special Fund for Emergency Activities (SFERA), to enable FAO to respond with enormous flexibility and speed to humanitarian crises. Belgium looks forward to continuing working with FAO in resilience and food crises, sustainable agriculture, and in developing improved mechanisms for flexible funding.

Thank you very much.