

**Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Jaana Husu-Kallio, Permanent Secretary of the
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Finland
on the occasion of the
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Thank you, Mr Chair, for giving me the floor. It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of Finland and our reappointed Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, who unfortunately could not be here today.

The FAO report on the links between migration, agriculture and rural development is indeed timely, and highlights one of the most burning international issues of our societies, that is undoubtedly also one of the key questions of sustainable development.

Creating opportunities for rural youth is of key importance. As long as rural areas are not able to provide economically viable sources of livelihood to enable people to climb out of poverty, there will be increasing pressure, especially on young people, to migrate. This underscores the importance of providing equal economic opportunities and access to services in rural areas.

Ladies and gentleman, in Finland, which is called as the happiest nation on earth today, we have also experienced this phenomenon. Firstly, about 150 years ago, many hundreds of thousands of young people fled poverty to go to the Americas. Then later, in the 1960s and even in 1970s, hundreds of thousands of mostly rural residents migrated to our neighbouring country of Sweden in search of better job opportunities. The migration was part of a rapid transformation of our rural areas.

Nowadays, indeed, the situation has changed and some segments of our economy – including within agriculture – have become dependent on immigration, as our own human resources are now inadequate to meet their needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Migration in developing countries often goes together with the fact that women predominantly take responsibility for agriculture. When men leave, women stay and take an even larger role in food production. Signs of this development are clearly visible, especially in a number of African and Asian countries. This puts more pressure on guaranteeing equal opportunities for women farmers in terms of land and use, access to resources and decision-making.

According to the FAO Report on migration, more migrants have moved regionally rather than from developing to developed countries. Furthermore, the most publicised migrants, namely international refugees, are almost entirely hosted by developing countries, with only a small fraction of them seeking asylum in high income countries.

The remittances that migrants send back to their families play a crucial role in development. This money is often invested in agriculture, or in sending boys and girls to school, or simply in eating food that is more nutritious. According to the World Bank, remittances are three times greater than development aid. This private money flow combined with public financing will significantly contribute to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Migration is a multi-faceted issue. It is important to understand the variety of factors triggering and affecting migration. Social inequalities, societal unrest and conflicts, combined with feeble economic prospects often lead to forced migration. Legal frameworks and public policies can encourage or discourage migration through a variety of means.

So ladies and gentleman, sustainable agriculture and rural development can address the root causes of migration. Additionally, the fight against climate change is of utmost importance. I am very proud of the ambitious climate objectives of the new Finnish Government, with its aim of Finland being a carbon neutral country by 2035. We all need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, help people and their livelihoods to adapt to the changing climate. Otherwise, only one option will be left for far too many people, and that is to leave their homes, without knowing if they will ever be able to return.

And my final remark is to say something about what happened in the Green Room, because there was just a draft resolution of the Conference adopted concerning antimicrobial resistance. That is very important to my country. I just say one sentence from the resolution as my main message to you. It underlines the need to increase political and public awareness, high-level engagement and leadership, to promote antimicrobial resistance awareness and that it can be addressed with a one health approach at a local, national, regional and global level.

Thank you very much for your attention Mr/Madam Chair.