

**Statement delivered by
His Excellency Mohammad Hossein Emadi
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to FAO
on the occasion of the
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Mr Vice-Chair,
Honorary Ministers,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations and Ambassadors,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the outset, I would like to appreciate Mr Graziano for his efforts and leadership of FAO, and congratulate Dr Qu Dongyu once again for his election and formally confirm my Government's full support for him, for better results and performance for FAO, for the benefit of all respected Members. We believe that yesterday's election was a victory for all and showed how our solidarity is important for better results and a better performance of FAO.

Mr President,

On the Agenda Item *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture, "Immigration, Agriculture and Rural Development*, Iran would like to appreciate FAO for their inclusion of migration issues as a strategy and high priority and would like to highlight the following issues.

First, Iran believes that *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture* will contribute to better understanding of the interconnectedness between immigration, agriculture and rural development. It is acknowledged that the key finding of challenges is a specific policy, for the current speed of immigration, agriculture and rural development, to ensure safe and regular migration, but this mostly depends on the country's context, at national level.

Iran is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants nationally and internationally, and Iran is also the fifth largest hosting country for refugees since 40 years ago after the Cold War, and is facing new and numerous immigration challenges. In Iran, like most other countries in the 1950s and 1960s, the conventional development approach was centralized, sectoral, industrial-based, top down and urban-oriented, and was the cause of massive rural migration, particularly because of the oil economy which made this process much more rapid. In 1956, for example, we had a 68 percent rural population. In 1976, it was 54 percent and 2016 it became almost 25 percent, with 75 percent living in urban areas. This is one of the highest rates of migration in the Near East and Middle East area and even Asia.

The rapid rate of rural migration has brought multidimensional, complex opportunities and challenges. It causes irregularities in social and economic conditions, and the rapid physical expansion of cities, the rise of poverty and inadequate access to housing in urban cities or towns. Due to the change in the public approach since 1979, small family farming and rural development became the center of the government's focus. There is now a big infrastructure for the rural population and rural development including education, electricity, access to the fossil fuel, road, renovation of village planning and housing, health medical services and also ICT, and internet for rural area.

During the last decade, the gross rate of migration from rural to urban has declined, and since 2011, there is an increase of the reverse kind of migration, from urban to rural. Now we are facing a new

challenge, a new chapter, a new paradigm of migration, which is completely different from the 1960s to 1990s.

The most important problem we are now facing is climate change in general, and drought in particular, which is the most influential factor for rural and even urban migration to the provincial capital. Alongside climate change we also have the issue of conflict, the regional conflict. As I mentioned, Iran is the fifth biggest house of refugees and we are facing a lot of movement due to the war in the area and in the region.

And lastly, something which is actually under investigation in terms of its impact, is the unilateral unfair sanctions. These have created a lot of pressure on trade, agriculture and on the rural population and even the urban population, particularly at the poorest level of the population because the pressure goes to the poor not to the rich or the middle class.

Climate change is also influencing in two different ways. In the negative way, as a destructive force, unlike the earlier kind of immigration. It affects the basic livelihood conditions of the population to leave their habitat in a destructive manner and it disturbs agriculture and food systems by changing basic production elements through the increase in natural disasters such as water scarcity, drought and sandstorms. This makes life and the production system completely destroyed.

In the end, and my final remarks, may I again renew the commitment of my country to support the implementation of policies with regard to immigration in order to achieve sustainable agriculture, rural development goals, and in particular, poverty eradication by 2030. With the new management team in FAO, we hope we can reach our goals and targets if we work together and have solidarity together.

Thank you very much.

Once again, thank you, Mr Chair.