

Statement delivered by
His Excellency Hee-Seog Kwon, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to FAO
On behalf of
His Excellency Lee Gae-ho, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs of the Republic of Korea
On the occasion of the
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)
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Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the 41st session of the FAO Conference. We are confident that under your able leadership the Conference will result in productive outcomes.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the Director-General, Dr. José Graziano da Silva and the Secretariat for their dedicated efforts toward the global Zero Hunger. During his tenure, Dr da Silva has demonstrated outstanding stewardship in leading the Organization by example and faithfully implementing tough mandates accorded to him. We will remember and cherish his achievements and legacy to continue the noble mission of the FAO.

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation would like to convey our heartfelt congratulations to Dr Qu Dongyu of the People's Republic of China on his election as the new Director-General to lead the FAO for the next four years.

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation appreciates the tremendous efforts made by FAO and other international organizations and the Member States to alleviate the global hunger. Despite all these efforts, however, 1.8 billion of the world's population is still suffering from chronic hunger. Unfortunately, due to the income gap between the urban and rural areas, those experiencing hunger and unstable food supply are concentrated in the rural areas.

Against this backdrop, I believe it is meaningful to exchange views on the issue of urban-rural migration and its impact on agriculture and rural development, and further explore new opportunities for cooperation among the Member States.

The rural population in the Republic of Korea has been increasing since 2015, thanks to the recent rise in the number of people returning to the farming and fishing villages. The trend is quite different from our common knowledge that the rural areas are disappearing. Rather we are witnessing young people turning their eyes to the rural areas, pursuing "little but certain happiness" or "balance between work and life." This is definitely a desirable trend for the sustainable agriculture and the rural community.

However, in general, the living condition in the farming villages is very poor, compared to that of the urban areas. Actually, one out of ten people who returned to the farming villages is moving back to the cities. The major cause of this return is the lack of infrastructure and services, which are essential for the quality of life in the rural areas.

Accordingly, the key agricultural and rural development policy objective of the Government of the Republic of Korea is to improve the living condition of the rural villages. We aim to create rural areas where everybody can enjoy necessary services without inconvenience.

In order to achieve this objective, my Government will undertake the following three measures.

First, we will build more than 900 core facilities in the centers of the farming villages to supply basic services such as child care, healthcare and retail as well as integrated services including culture, education and jobs.

Considering the nation-wide minimum requirement for life support services and infrastructure, we will continue to identify and expand deficient infrastructure for the rural areas. At the end of 2018, 488 complexes were built or are under construction.

Second, we will create an environment to ensure stable housing for young farmers by expanding rental housing complexes for them in the farming villages. Furthermore, we plan to create four pilot housing complexes until next year that are equipped with facilities for childcare, culture and leisure services, for which the young generation is in high demand.

Third, and not the least, we put the priority on creating various kinds of jobs in agriculture and rural areas to maintain vitality in the rural communities, and we are making significant efforts at all levels to bring people and particularly the youths to farming villages.

In this regard, we are trying to link the demands in the field of agriculture and rural areas with the employment of young people who can meet these demands, by establishing new licenses such as animal nursing technician, grain manager and forest leisure sports instructor. We are also creating jobs relating to regional resources and rural communities such as healing and care services.

When rural villages become livable, the overcrowded phenomenon in the cities will be mitigated. In return, the competitiveness of the cities as well as the quality of lives will improve. This will also bring vitality back to the farming villages, and lead to the promotion of balanced development of the whole country.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea remains open to the Member States' requests for cooperation in the agricultural and rural development. Based on our successful experiences of agricultural and rural development, we will do our utmost to support the Member States in need by providing necessary assistance in technologies and infrastructure.

Thank you.