

**Statement delivered by
Ms Ann Marie Moulton
Counsellor, Alternate Representative of the Republic of South Africa to FAO
on the occasion of the
41st Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)
25 June 2019**

Mr Chairperson,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to extend a vote of thanks to the organisers of the conference and convey our greetings to the all the Distinguished delegates gathered here today.

Indeed, it is an honour to be part of the auspicious gathering of the 41st Session of the FAO Conference.

I would like to congratulate the incoming Director-General, Dr Qu Dongyu, on his election. South Africa looks forward to working closely with him.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay our gratitude to the outgoing Director-General, Dr José Graziano da Silva, for providing excellent leadership in managing the affairs of this organization during his tenure.

South Africa is truly grateful for FAO's unwavering commitment in fighting food insecurity.

In our quest to fight poverty and hunger, South Africa has taken practical steps in addressing problems faced by small scale farmers, whom we categorise as smallholder and subsistence farmers.

The agricultural and agro-processing sector is important to the economy of my country, as noted by President Cyril Ramaphosa. It has the potential of generating more than one million jobs. Given the current climatic and food security challenges that South Africa is experiencing, we have entered into partnership with FAO on two Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) towards supporting both smallholder and subsistence farmers. These support interventions are addressing food security and drought challenges, especially targeting the most vulnerable households in our society.

The current partnerships aim to establish information management systems, supply of production inputs and capacity building for our people in particular, youth and women in rural areas.

South Africa is grateful for the efforts displayed by FAO in addressing challenges of smallholder farmers and family farmers. I am reminded of FAO's International Symposium on Agricultural Innovation for Family Farmers: unlocking the potential of agricultural innovation to achieve sustainable development goals, which was hosted in Rome from 21 – 23 November 2018. We are appreciative of these efforts, as they touch our people's lives.

Chair,

South Africa experiences most forms of migration, from international to internal migration. The country currently hosts a significant number of migrants from across the African continent. Over and above this, since the advent of democracy in 1994, internal rural migration to urban areas has become a new challenge that the government has to face. The biggest drivers of these domestic migration flows are primarily unemployment, lack of infrastructure and poverty. In short, the drivers of these migrations are related to the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment, which South Africa has put at the pinnacle of its agenda.

Chair,

South Africa is pleased to share that, in collaboration with FAO, the country has produced a National Food and Nutrition Security Plan. The Plan is premised on six Strategic Objectives that promote the role of food safety nets; health and nutrition; increased production, amongst others, and aims to reduce food insecurity.

The Plan seeks to promote sustainable food systems which are in alignment with the Ten-Year Framework of Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP). Targeted programmes at both National and Provincial spheres are in place to ensure success of this intervention. An example of the targeted support is the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP) which focuses on increased production with priority given to youth, women and people with disabilities, in the interest of promoting gender equality. An outcome of such focused support is the creation of on-farm and off-farm employment.

In 2020, South Africa will chair the African Union. The South African Embassy in Rome will be responsible for coordinating the Africa Day celebrations during May 2020. Working with the Rome Based Agencies (RBAs), Missions accredited to the RBAs and the African Missions based in Rome, the Holy See and the Republic of Italy, we propose the coordination of events focused on promoting support for development in the agricultural sector in Africa.

Throughout the Conference, South Africa has called for a closer working relationship between the RBAs and World Union of Wholesale Markets. This cooperation shall, in a simplistic, cost efficient and effective manner, provide access to global markets and lead to continuous improvements in the agricultural sector.

We are grateful that FAO chose to invite Madam Graça Machel to provide the keynote address for the McDougall Memorial Lecture on Saturday, 22 June. Let us remember the key take-outs from her lecture:

- No child should die of hunger;
- Machine manufacturers and the agricultural sector should come together to produce tools to reduce the burden on the physical bodies of women in the agricultural sector;
- Should we fail to eradicate hunger, we should prepare for our grandchildren to look us in the eye and tell us that we failed. Should we claim false success, we must prepare for our grandchildren to look us in the eye and tell us that we did fail and we did lie.

In conclusion, South Africa is committed to a prosperous Africa and a better world. I am confident that the outcomes of this elective conference will help usher in a new chapter in relations between South Africa and FAO. In the coming decade, agriculture will be expected to play a crucial role in eliminating poverty, hunger and unemployment in the world and South Africa looks forward to being a part of the solution.

Most importantly, we wish to thank each and every staff member at FAO and other RBAs. You are the backbone and the permanent institutional memory of these important international organisations. We thank you for your professionalism, dedication and support to member states, keep it up.

I thank you.