

Moving from Despair to Hope

**Speech of
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**Mr. Chairperson
Mr. Director General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and gentlemen**

At the outset, let me join others in felicitating our able chair and his colleagues in the bureau for successfully conducting the business of this Conference. The presence of so many world leaders in our midst bears testimony to their collective will to ensure sustainable food security.

We would like to express our appreciation of FAO which under the able leadership of its Director General has been making significant contributions towards global food security His Statement on the FAO activities reassures us of continuation of the important role of the Organization.

Mr. Chair

The world is facing an extremely grim prospect of food insecurity on a scale not experienced in recent times. While this is due to high and volatile food prices, other disturbing trends have exacerbated the problems. These include among others fast rising prices of essential inputs such as fertilizer, increasingly higher oil prices, restriction by some countries on food export, inadequate budgetary capacity in many countries to expand safety nets for the poor, and low access to food by marginal groups Bangladesh has been producing much of her own food and been able to lower incidence of poverty substantially. Now she sees such gains being eroded due to these trends and also the capacity to produce her own food is under threat.. The rank of the poor may be swelling again., It is under such perspectives that Bangladesh has to weigh her options regarding the current high food prices, the threats posed by climate change, transboundary transmission of pests and diseases and the issue of bio-energy.

Mr. Chair!

What needs to be done is more or less known but not necessarily how to do it? How do we for example, raise domestic production when fertiliser prices are rising fast and extremely high price of oil makes irrigated agriculture much costlier. Similarly, how can a country ensure that it can buy food internationally when export of food is being restricted by some countries?

Ensuring availability will not automatically ensure food security. People must have purchasing power backed by income or transfers to access food. Examples of high availability and low access leading to famines are not rare in history. Any substantial expansion of safety nets, however, is likely to put pressure on the budgetary resources. Some multilateral development partners are exploring ways to relieve such pressure. Others should also join the effort.

Mr. Chair person,

Climate change is an additional, long acting and highly complex phenomenon that will threaten food, water, energy, health and livelihood security in many countries including Bangladesh for a very long time to come. Sea level rise in low-deltaic countries may permanently submerge coastal land and lower agricultural production. For these reasons, Bangladesh is fully committed to the Bali Road Map. But adaptation funding is still meager or non-existent. New mechanisms and instruments for funding adaptation are necessary. So is adaptation research as, adaptation needs to be put in the context of particular socio-economic, legal and cultural contexts.

Mitigation is an essential climate management mechanism. Bio-energy is only one path towards that in particular contexts. However, if it threatens food security, we need to find technological and socio-economic solutions to the problems in a globally cooperative way. The issue of trans-boundary transmission of animal diseases is similarly extremely important because it threatens livelihood, income and food security. We therefore look forward to the recommendations of the relevant groups of expert in this regard.

Mr. Chair!

Where do all these leave us? We now have a Task Force formed by the Secretary General of UN. The Task Force may consider the promotion of an International Food Security Order in which all countries will have a fair opportunity to protect its citizens from food insecurity without prejudicing the rights of others. This may have several integral components including the establishment of a Global Food Fund, proposed earlier by Bangladesh and endorsed by LDCs, and putting in place innovative mechanisms such as compensatory financing due to high energy costs to ensure short term food security as well as funding trade in food, and budgetary support for expanding safety nets.

Similarly, for agriculture to adapt to climate change, new mechanisms and instruments are necessary. These, however, have to be coordinated with the climate change management efforts under the UNFCCC.

All such activities need to be planned and coordinated internationally and nationally. FAO in consultation with other stakeholders may prepare an action plan to this end. All such programmes may be under the umbrella of the Task Force.

There was a time when the Roman Legions went out to conquer the world. Let us be the next legion out of Rome, not to conquer any country, but banish hunger, malnutrition, disease and despair. Let us move boldly from despair to hope.

Thank you Mr. Chair. Thank you Excellencies and honourable delegates. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.