

**STATEMENT BY MR CHRISTIAAN De GRAAFF, HON. MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA TO THE
HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY: THE
CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOENERGY
ROME, ITALY 3 - 5 JUNE 2008**

Your Excellencies!

Distinguished Delegates!

Mr Chairman,

Allow me, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Botswana to join in thanking the FAO Director General for convening this meeting and also for FAO's relentless efforts over the past years in sensitizing the world over the threats, risks and sufferings brought about by food insecurity in the world.

This conference provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of climate change and bioenergy on the World Food Security as well as discussing ways in which access to food can be achieved.

For a start, I fully associate myself with statements made by previous speakers who indicated that it should be the desire

of each and every country to continue to find ways of ensuring that the most vulnerable groups are cushioned against the effect of increasing food prices.

We must note that the current situation serves as a reminder of how far away we are in meeting earlier commitment to eradicate hunger and malnutrition as well as improving the food security situation particularly in developing countries.

Our immediate response should be to prevent human suffering due to hunger and malnutrition and to induce a rapid response to restore a better balance between food supply and demand.

To sustain the impact of these immediate measures we need to follow-up with medium term actions that will accelerate and have a permanent reduction in the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition both at the national level and global level addressing among others trade policies, market access and their impact of climate change.

Our long term focus must be on generating and enabling farmers to apply sustainable technologies for commercial production which are climate friendly.

Currently the world is faced with food crisis which could be attributed to a number of factors such as natural disasters caused by global warming (floods, drought, high temperatures, loss of arable land due to aridity and rise in sea levels etc.); loss of arable land to bioenergy crop production which competes with land for traditional crops. The global food crisis impacts on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which specifically seeks among others, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

It is understandable that an alternative energy system was necessary to address concerns on energy security which was threatened by the 1970s oil embargoes and environmental issues emanating from climate change resulting from the use of fossil fuel. Hence, biomass energy was among some of the initiatives to ensure availability of energy in the 21st century and a solution to climate change as a renewable source of energy.

However, rapid expansion of bioenergy production has socio-economic concerns which are both positive and negative. The benefits accrued from bioenergy production are as follows; promotes food security and livelihoods of the rural populations through provision of employment, income, and infrastructure; reduces poverty; reduces carbon emissions and stimulates the double role of agriculture and forestry.

On the other hand bioenergy production impacts negatively on food security. For instance production of ethanol requires more grain hence it competes with traditional crops for food.

This leads to increase in food prices resulting from food shortage (e.g. sugar, grain flours and cooking oil). These exacerbate malnutrition of the vulnerable groups in the developing countries more especially the net importing countries such as Botswana. Energy security and food security competes in use of water, land and other productive resources

Our forecast in Botswana for this year, shows that total expected production for all grains is 15% of the domestic requirements which means 85% will come from imports. These rising food prices places a tremendous challenge to the small and vulnerable economies which are dependent on imports such as Botswana.

Bio-energy production brings challenges on agriculture in developed and developing countries, hence as policy makers we should review our policies to ensure a balance between energy security and food security.

In conclusion Botswana wishes to express its readiness and willingness to work with you Mr Chairman and the international community to work out a programme that will secure the necessary momentum for full successful implementation of the proposed strategies aimed at ensuring global energy and food security.

I thank you for your attention