

**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President
Republic of Indonesia**

**Conveyed by H.E. Dr. Anton Apriyantono
Minister of Agriculture**

**At the High-level Conference
On World Food Security:
The Challenges of Climate Change
And Bio-energy**

FAO Headquarters, Rome, 4 June 2008

Distinguished Delegates,

We hold this meeting at a crucial time— when the world is confronted by spiralling prices of energy and basic food commodities. We must therefore analyze the situation carefully and work toward a global strategy for addressing this grievous challenge.

The current soaring price of food means that it will be extremely difficult for developing countries to achieve their MDGs by the 2015 deadline. We are also staring at the possibility of new armed conflicts breaking out and the prospects of a dangerous instability throughout the world.

There is no single cause for this food crisis. It is a multifaceted problem caused by interlinked factors, ranging from skyrocketing oil prices to rigid protectionism in the international trading system; from the crushing impact of climate change on farm productivity to a massive shift from food crops to bio-fuel production.

The explosive growth of the world's population during the last half-century, compounded by a reckless lifestyle in industrialized societies, has driven a sharp increase in demand for food and other agricultural commodities. At the same time, over the years, the world has been inordinately dependent on fossil fuels. Then suddenly, a rising concern at climate change has brought about a scramble to develop bio-energy resources at the sacrifice of food production.

Fortunately for us in Indonesia, at this stage we can still manage to maintain a balance between demand and supply of food. Domestic prices of food are stable. But to keep our head above water in the long run, we must strive to further increase production of food and other agricultural commodities.

The idea is not to keep food prices down, but to keep them stable and within the reach of the poor. We must never forget that a reasonable increase in the prices of foodstuffs can be an opportunity and an incentive for farmers to improve their productivity and increase their income.

Above all, we must ever be vigilant to the vulnerability of the agriculture sector to climate change. A chain in the rainfall pattern is already a very inconvenient reality. If this is followed by a rise in the sea level and a further rise in the global temperature, the impact on agricultural resources and production systems would be severe, with serious consequences on crop productivity.

An effective global strategy to address the challenge of climate change entails a new agreement as proposed in the “Bali Road Map” that came out of 13th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC. The next step is for the parties to produce “a comprehensive post-2012 global framework”. Meanwhile we are called upon to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emission.

We are called upon to adapt to climate change by breeding hardier crops, conserving and using agricultural resources more efficiently and enhancing

our ability to predict the weather. We must intensify research and development on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. We must promote technology transfers and create a funding mechanism that will help the poor adapt to climate change.

And we cannot be thoughtless about the methods we use to increase food production. For example, in Indonesia we cannot just rush in and clear new land for agriculture: that will cancel out our efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change. In line with our commitment to the mechanism for Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), we must not resort to any measures that can bring about deforestation and forest degradation.

We also see to it that feedstock plantations can only be established on unutilized land, thereby avoiding greenhouse gases (GHG) emission, while making use of otherwise unproductive soil.

So instead of clearing new land, we optimize existing agricultural lands. We rehabilitate and resume the cultivation of abandoned agricultural lands.

Thus, national and international policies should be geared to addressing the need to minimize food security risks among the poor, to provide employment, to address environmental concerns, to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and to achieve a net reduction in emissions.

The successful implementation of such policies will have a positive impact on the future of developing countries: it will lead to the alleviation of poverty through the creation of jobs and to the generation of energy from renewable sources.

We must also ensure that supply and demand of bio-fuels between developed and developing countries are equitable. We have to take into account not only the need of economies for fuel but also the need of the poor for nourishment. The developed countries have to increase their efficiency in the use of energy so that demand for bio-fuels will not interfere with the stability of food supply. Hence, international cooperation in research and development on bio-fuels is essential.

The United Nations should therefore take the lead in promoting the sustainable development of bio-fuels while protecting the poor from food insecurity. For its part, Indonesia is focusing on the development of bio-fuels based on non-food crops like jathropha curcas and castor oil, which are raised on previously unutilized land. We urge other countries to do the same.

Moreover, we must work toward the attainment of a genuinely sustainable global platform of food security. That platform must help ensure social stability in countries most affected by the present crisis.

We should therefore revisit our agricultural policies at both the national and international levels. We need to put back sustainable agriculture into the

centre of our development strategy. We must also optimize our scarce natural resources, especially land and water, to empower the poor. All of these need greater investment from international community to support agricultural research and development, infrastructure development and capacity building in the developing world.

In addition we need a more equitable multilateral trading system that will encourage developing countries to design their agricultural policies with an eye to food security. In this spirit, we urge the early conclusion of a balanced outcome of the Doha Development Round.

And let us all support the FAO's Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP) as an urgent short-term measure to mitigate the dire impact of soaring food prices. Indonesia is ready to take part in this initiative and to share its long experience in the field of food security.

We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to set up a high-powered task force of eminent experts and leading policy authorities to address the problem. In carrying out its mandate to coordinate policy across more than 20 UN agencies, the task force must not operate in a vacuum. It should consult with member states.

And considering that food security is a vital concern of all nations, I earnestly suggest that General Assembly put the spotlight on the issue of the food crisis by making it the theme of its forthcoming 63rd session.

Moreover, let us never forget the regional approach in building up global food security. Rice is the staple food of half of humanity but it is in the Asia-Pacific region that the surge in demand for rice is most acutely felt. I therefore propose that the region's food security be enhanced through a build-up of a common stockpile of the staple.

Finally, let me share with you a thought that has been fermenting in my mind: the measures I have been proposing here could be the building blocks of a Green Revolution. Indeed, another Green Revolution is overdue.

The first Green Revolution, which took place in the 1960s, was by and large an Asian phenomenon. It led, at least for a while, into spectacular increases in rice and wheat harvests. It helped a good number of countries, including Indonesia, achieve food security.

Unfortunately it was not sustained. We thought industrialization could stand alone without the support of agriculture. But we know better now.

I do believe that another Green Revolution can be successfully waged, and this time it can be sustained. And I do believe that the next Green Revolution can reach beyond Asia and to Africa and to the farthest places where a food crop can be raised to save human beings from the pangs of hunger. This time, the international community must invest in the effort and work as a team.

This time it must be done right. This time it must be comprehensive and it must be sustained.

For at stake are the lives of millions who could die because of hunger. And not only their lives are at stake but also their dignity as human beings. Freedom from hunger, after all, is one of the most basic human rights.

It is therefore a matter of the most basic social justice that humankind, through our concerted efforts, must overcome the food crisis that confronts us today.

I thank you.