

Statement by the Head of Delegation Republic of Korea

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to join the previous speakers in expressing my appreciation to Director General Jacques Diouf for his initiative in hosting this important meeting on world food security at this critical juncture.

I would also like to express my appreciation and support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his outstanding leadership in managing the current food crisis, including his efforts in establishing the 'High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis' in late April.

The international community is currently facing a serious situation as grain prices continue to sharply increase.

With this, there continues to be inflation in the price of commodities, increasing hunger and malnutrition, which has prompted growing concerns over the prospects for achieving the MDGs pursued by the international community since 2001.

Moreover, the damage from the cyclone to agricultural land in Myanmar is expected to have a serious impact on the total rice production in Southeast Asia.

Therefore, coordinated and creative international action is essential in tackling the looming food crisis. Countries must display an efficient and rapid response to the current situation as it is critical for our survival. Emergency humanitarian aid may offer the first and immediate solution. Because those living in extreme poverty, especially women, children, and the old, are the most vulnerable in a crisis, it is crucial to increase food and cash support to these groups. In this regard, the government of the Republic of Korea welcomes the fact that the World Food Programme has met its extraordinary call to compensate for the increased cost of food. Korea also has agreed to contribute US\$1.5 million to food aid appeal in April, and will continue to participate in humanitarian aid efforts through international organizations such as the FAO, WFP and UNICEF.

In addition to international aid, the systematic efforts of individual governments to build a social safety net are encouraged, including the provision of school meals for the vulnerable in societies, food for work programs and the increase of food vouchers.

In accordance with this short-term prescription for the food crisis, there is a need to devise mid- and long-term measures based on in-depth research and an analysis of the rise in food prices. As for the biofuel issue which has been pointed out as one of the major causes of the rise in the grain price, efforts for the development of technology are essential to ensure the use of biofuel in a manner that is compatible with food security.

In the long-term, international cooperation for food security should be conducted with a view to increase the agricultural productivity of developing countries. The international community should exert efforts to expand technology and developmental aid, and consider supporting agricultural infrastructure and enlarging R&D assistance for the advancement of agriculture in developing countries. Agriculture is not the only area that the international community must continue to have interest in as cooperation towards technical assistance in fishery is also a necessity. It is essential that this process is also backed with the efforts of developing countries themselves.

Lastly, there is a need to remove export restrictions that have been placed by certain export countries. Although export barriers may ensure domestic food security in the short-term, they will worsen price instability in the long run by exacerbating the world food market and decreasing domestic productivity due to a relatively low domestic price.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the food crisis is directly linked to the survival of millions, the international community must immediately begin coordinating efforts to tackle this crisis before the situation worsens.

The Republic of Korea firmly believes that through cooperation between member states, the FAO will be able to effectively reduce hunger and poverty levels the world is now facing. The Republic of Korea also stands ready to provide its full support and

cooperation to efforts in these areas.

In closing, I would like to once again reiterate that the Government of the Republic of Korea appreciates the leadership of the UN and the leading role it has played to overcome the food crisis, and stands ready to play our due role and part in the process.

Thank you.