



República de Moçambique

**High-level Conference on World Food Security: the challenges of
Climate Change and Bioenergy
Rome, 3 – 5 June 2008**

**Statement by Honourable Soares Nhaca, Minister of Agriculture of
Mozambique**

Rome, 4th June 2008

Your Excellency the President of the Conference

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government

Your Excellency Secretary-General of the United Nations

Your Excellency Director-General of FAO

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

For Mozambique it is a great honour to be present in this magna conference, amongst so many dignitaries united in the strong commitment to guarantee that every single person has food security, in a world ever more devastated by the food crisis, that affects prevalently the developing countries like ours. My gratefulness goes to Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO for organizing and inviting us to participate in this important event and to the Italian government for their hospitality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting could not take place in a more convenient moment. The Food Security of all the citizens of the world is jeopardized by the high prices of food and oil. And the climatic changes worsen even more this threat.

Similarly to what happens in many regions of the world, in the last decades Mozambique has been devastated, ever more frequently, by natural disasters, specifically floods, droughts and cyclones, which have negative impacts on agriculture, on the forests and fishing, and also causing the destruction of economical and social infrastructure.

The climatic changes cause the increasing of plagues and diseases, that affect agricultural crops and cattle. Right now that I am talking to you, my country is experiencing an outbreak of the red locust plague in the central region, which is one of the most productive, putting in risk the efforts of

thousands of family households that depend on agriculture for their subsistence. We will have to deviate resources that were originally destined to seeds and fertilizers to acquire pesticides and fight this plague.

The Government of Mozambique has been particularly concerned with the food security of its people. The measures of immediate relief to the vulnerable populations are held back by the lack of resources. For us, the answer to this situation is to produce more and better our own food supplies. Well before the crisis the Government had outlined the strategy of what was called the Green Revolution aimed at increasing the production and productivity and generating revenue and jobs in the rural areas, where more than 70% of the population lives.

To face this challenge the Government of Mozambique has created an Inter-Ministerial Committee to present a plan of action to increase food production. In the next two weeks this plan will be evaluated by the Government and then subjected to public discussion.

With the current food crisis what is up to us is to accelerate the implementation of the Green Revolution and increase the fishing production, mainly of our artisan fishermen. What we thought could be done in ten years now has to be done in three years: eliminate the deficit in the agrarian products where we are competitive, like the case of rice, and explore more the agricultural potential that our country possesses.

All this requires that a lot more resources are available immediately, to assure the availability of seeds, fertilizers, research and extension services, building of irrigation systems, rehabilitation of roads and construction of silos. The access to credit by the small scale farmers, that are the milestone of agriculture production in Mozambique, is also an immediate challenge, in

parallel with the access to the appropriate technologies and the processing of agricultural products to increase their value.

Why do I emphasize the 'immediately'? That's because the agricultural campaign in Mozambique starts in September and the indication of availability of resources has to be transmitted to the farmers now, so that they can start to prepare and expand the farming fields. If the resources arrive late we will have lost an entire year of opportunity to win this battle.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Government of Mozambique has been following very closely the discussion about food security and bio-energy. Last year we had a great influx of land requests for biofuel viable crops. To make sure that the production of biofuels does not come in conflict with the greater objective of food security, the Government has taken a series of decisions, the most important being:

- (a) First: not to allow that crops traditionally dedicated to subsistence to be used as source material for the production of biofuels;
- (b) Second: development of the National Agrarian Zoning, to better orientate the investments on the sector and improve land management;
- (c) Third: to redirect all the remaining biofuel production projects to marginal land;

For Mozambique the agricultural production and food security come in the first place, but the Government recognizes that biofuels are also an opportunity to increase both revenues and the employment in the rural areas, if they are viable in a socioeconomic and environmental point of view. To assure that this happens, the Government has designed its own policy and strategy on biofuels and actively participates in the process of discussion of

the criteria of biofuel production sustainability.

Ladies and gentlemen

We are facing a critical moment. The objectives are laid down and the path to follow is known. We have to act now, all of us, rich and poor, to solve the problem and reach the development objectives of the Millennium, that are seriously compromised. We have to add that to the elements that are still refraining our ability to move on: availability of financial resources and access to technologies and markets, in a partnership in which we all have to be winners.

Thank you