



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Address by Her Excellency
Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa
FAO High Level Conference on
Food Security: Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy**

ROME, ITALY

03–05 JUNE 2008

SALUTATIONS

Chairperson,

Your Excellency, Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban-Ki moon,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Diouf,

Excellencies, Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Permanent Representatives,

Honorable guests and friends,

Ladies and gentlemen:

From the onset let me congratulate you on your election as the chairperson of this august meeting. On behalf of the people and the Government of South Africa, I join other delegations in expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Jacques Diouf, for convening this High Level Conference on food security and the challenges of climate change and bio-energy. This gathering must help us all understand, in a non-partisan manner, the relationship between food security, climate change and bio-energy.

We are all aware that our world today is faced with persistent and unsustainable levels of poverty and underdevelopment. Repeatedly, previous speakers have alluded to the alarming statistics of people who are affected by food shortages, malnutrition and poverty.

We have assembled before in many a fora, including two World Summits on Food, yet the goal of feeding the world's poor and hungry remains elusive

Chairperson,

It is our wish that this Conference finally succeeds in putting together a set of practical measures that address in a concise and comprehensive manner, the challenge of feeding the poor of the World.

As world leaders assembled and represented here, we must resolve to deal with the existing structural faults in the global economy that have largely resulted in unfair competition, inefficient markets and a biased trading regime.

This remains the only way only way of ensuring that we attain the UN Millennium Development Goals which promise to halve poverty and hunger by 2015 which is a modest but noble goal.

Chairperson,

We call for the speedy conclusion of the Doha Development Round within the context of the WTO Round of negotiations which will be a concrete and comprehensive response that binds all of us without imposing greater obligations on developing countries for the benefit of developed ones.

The current high levels of agricultural commodity prices provide us with a unique opportunity to conclude the Round that would lead to a real and substantial reduction in trade and production distorting domestic support.

Chairperson,

In Africa Agriculture forms a major part of economic activity, from subsistence to large scale commercial farming. There is a need to significantly and vigorously increase the current level of agricultural productivity and provide support to this important sector to enable our countries to become food exporters again.

There is a general consensus on the continent that agricultural reform within the framework of NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is an effective means to achieve food security and poverty alleviation. The recent review on the progress made to implement the decision to allocate at least 10% of national budgets to support CAADP, noted that slow progress was made in agricultural investment and rural development due to limited budgetary resources, amidst competing priorities. Notwithstanding this challenge, we must all act now because the strife caused by this crisis is already upon us.

This conference presents the most strategic opportunity to target investments in the already identified areas of food production and agricultural development, an example of which are the FAO's model involving 51 nations and regional bodies mentioned by the DG earlier today.

South Africa has already committed to increase social safety nets, agricultural land under production, human resource development, technology transfer, financial support for small and medium sized farmers. Very importantly, we give support to women who act as front-line combatants in the fight against poverty and hunger. We support the Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa.

Chairperson,

We call upon our development partners to channel more development assistance in the area of agricultural production as well as assist member states to reduce their food import bills by supporting the already identified programs. This renewed focus should target investments in agricultural production, irrigation infrastructure, access to fertiliser and seeds, agro-processing and market development including extension services, general human resources and meaningful involvement of women.

Chairperson,

We further urge Member States and donors to increase their contributions to FAO to ensure that developing countries continue to receive the best advice and information. The chronic neglect by developed countries and non-contributions, late payments and arrears are all strangling the work of FAO, which poor countries could benefit from. African countries need Technical Cooperation Programs. Without finance, from those who can afford, these can not be realised. Allow me to use this opportunity to acknowledge all the initiatives aimed at resource mobilisation made by the Director-General of FAO.

South Africa recognises all the efforts you have made and we hope to explore significant means of supporting the South – South cooperation, a mechanism that provides us with more opportunities for extending solidarity and support to other regions.

Chairperson,

It is the view of my delegation that the production of bio-energy should not be allowed to negatively affect food security nor the land tenure of smallholders and agro-biodiversity. We should support efforts to continue to conduct research and strengthen collaboration and partnerships to promote sustainable production systems. As I have indicated the programs are there in detail at national and regional levels, we need additional resources and our own resolve to implement.

Chairperson,

Most African countries, though they emit the least gas, are generally extremely exposed to the negative effects of climate change in particular droughts and desertification that continue to pose a major threat to food security. That has to be addressed to enable a true polluter pays principle to hold.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we hope that this conference will reach consensus on wide ranging measures to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the impact of climate change and bio-energy production which has resulted in high food prices all over the world. Our people are expecting nothing less from us.

We thank the countries that have made concrete commitments today, e.g. France, Spain, Japan, and hopefully more will follow.

I thank you.