

**SPEECH BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AT  
SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION IN  
ROME**

Program Director

Your Excellencies, Heads of State presents

FAO Director General

WHO Director General

Ministers of Health and Agriculture for the different countries

UN Agencies represented

Distinguished delegates from countries and various organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure and honour to be part of this important event, the **Second International Conference on Nutrition** and to present the status of food and nutrition security in the Kingdom of Swaziland to meet international standards.

Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Kingdom of Swaziland has embraced the plan of action that came out from the **First International Conference that was held in 1992**. In this regard the country adopted the plan and customised it to our own context having acknowledged the fact that we faced with the burden of malnutrition and food insecurity. The issues that were pertinent in the country were: stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, low exclusive breastfeeding rates, food insecurity and low immunisation rates.

In this regard the country is delighted to share with this meeting the progress that has been archived with regards to the above issues as follows:

- The country has developed policies and strategies to guide food and nutrition security interventions by different stakeholders. Such policies included the comprehensive Agriculture Sector Policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan, Irrigation Policy and Livestock Development Policy.
- Emanating from the Nutrition Plan of Action developed in 1992, the country has managed to establish a Nutrition Council responsible for advocacy, coordination and strategic guidance on nutrition issues.
- The Government has prioritized Agriculture and Health amongst other sectors in the national budget allocation.
- To promote Food and Nutrition Security, the Ministry of Agriculture has embarked on a number of programs that are aimed at improving productivity, diversification and commercialization. These include intensification of irrigation development, input subsidy program and promoting climate smart agriculture.
- Children between 6-59 months are given vitamin A supplements to prevent vitamin A deficiencies and this is done with assistance from partners from both NGOs and UN agencies. Other interventions aimed at prevention of micronutrient deficiencies include food fortification and the promotion of household backyard gardens.
- The country has made a remarkable progress on promoting exclusive breastfeeding in infants from 0-6months and the exclusive breastfeeding rate is at 44% which is from 32% according to DHS 2006/7.
- The country has also met international standards with regards to wasting and underweight which is at 1% and 6% respectively.

Having mentioned the above achievements, the country is still facing challenges towards reaching the international standards. Some of the challenges are:

- Stunting level is still above 30% according to MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey) 2010.
- Though some improvements have been made on increasing exclusive breast feeding, Swaziland is still at 44% which is

still far from the 80% which is the target according to WHA 65 (World Health Assembly recommendations).

- Non communicable diseases burden is on the increase.
- The country has not been able to produce enough of its staple food crop, maize, to meet national consumption requirements due to high costs of inputs and the effects of climate change.

May I now take this opportunity to thank the organisers and facilitators for ensuring the success of such a high-level global food and nutrition forum. Swaziland is also committed to work towards the reduction of food and nutrition insecurity and to improve the health and nutrition status of the Swazi population.

Swaziland underscores and appreciates the unprecedented support it receives from International Agencies like UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO EU, IFAD to name a few. The country still welcomes such support to ensure that food and nutrition security issues are adequately addressed.

Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen may I wish you all a very successful conference and fruitful deliberations.

I thank you all.