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Statement by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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**Statement by Mr Kostas Stamoulis (FAO)
UNCTAD 14, 21st July 2016**

Madam/Mr Chairperson

Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors and distinguished delegates

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to be with you in this 14th Session of UNCTAD and an honour to make this statement on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

2016 marks the first year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The new Agenda presents a vision for a fairer, more prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable world in which ‘no one is left behind’. Delivering on the commitments made requires constant dedication and hard work on the three fronts of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Agriculture and food systems, through their links to food security and nutrition, health, rural development and the environment, contribute towards many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The agricultural sector faces a number of challenges. Agricultural production will have to increase by 60 percent by 2050 to meet the growing demand of a world population that will exceed 9 billion people. And this will have to happen in a context of increasing scarcity of natural resources especially land and water.

Climate change will have unpredictable implications for the smooth functioning of food and agricultural systems. The stability and reliability of food supplies are at risk in a diverse range of geographical regions and climate zones.

Agriculture and the food system will need to adapt to the changing climate and contribute to mitigating its effects. The Paris Agreement adopted at COP21 paves the way for countries to develop appropriate climate adaptation and mitigation responses. However, we need to move fast. Our response to climate change today will define how we feed the world tomorrow.

It is therefore clear that sustainable agricultural intensification is the only viable path ahead. This requires a paradigm shift in the way we produce and consume food and a corresponding effort to boost agricultural productivity and strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems but also of rural communities.

With the growing resource constraints, reducing losses and waste becomes a key element for sustainable agricultural development. Reduction of food losses and waste will be key in increasing food availability while reducing the burden on the resource base. The 2030 Agenda

has recognised this potential, under SDG 12, and identified a specific target (12.3) aiming to halve per capita global food waste and reduce food losses by 2030.

We cannot hope to use agriculture as an effective means to eradicate hunger without a substantial increase in agricultural investment. Last year, FAO, together with IFAD and WFP, estimated that an additional annual investment of USD 265 billion in agriculture and social protection systems is required to eliminate hunger by 2030, compared to a “business-as-usual” scenario. While this may appear a large sum, it is actually only a fraction of the cost that hunger imposes on economies and societies, estimated at several trillion dollars a year.

However, *greater* investment does not automatically translate into *better* investment. It is for this reason that FAO has supported the development of mechanisms and instruments to guide and ensure that investments are responsible and benefit all stakeholders. These include the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI), endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

These principles and guidelines help ensure widespread access to investment opportunities and benefits, as well as the sustainability of social, economic and environmental impacts over time. FAO continues to support countries in their implementation through the creation of an umbrella programme to make the CFS-RAI functional and effective at country level. Partnerships are essential in that regard : governments in the lead, farmers who are the major investors in the agricultural sector, farmers’ organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations.

Eliminating malnutrition in all its forms (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies but also overweight and obesity) requires coherent and coordinated approaches. At the Second International Conference on Nutrition in 2014, countries recommended a set of policy options to address these emerging problems. The Decade of Action on Nutrition proclaimed by the UN General Assembly providing an umbrella for a wide range of stakeholders to work together to address pressing nutrition issues.

Trade is another critical area for global food security and sustainable development. Trade affects the four dimensions of food security – availability, access, stability and utilization. Projected patterns of consumption and production point to an increasing role for trade in food products to meet the growing demands in food-deficit countries. On the other hand, trade liberalization can bring risks with it especially for small producers operating in import competing sectors. Achieving the right balance is essential, especially for countries where agriculture is still the backbone of the economy.

While the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi adopted a number of important decisions related to agriculture, we must continue to strive for a truly global, rules-based, fair and transparent trade framework where countries can balance their national food security and development objectives without harming their trading partners. We see that trade and food security concerns can be better reconciled in the multilateral trading system by improving the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

Honourable Chairperson

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

In our efforts to achieve sustainable agriculture and food systems and free humanity from the scourge of hunger and malnutrition, we must place smallholders and family farmers at the centre of our action. More than 90 percent of farms in the world are run by families. Ensuring that small-scale and family farmers have proper access to productive resources, markets and credit can significantly boost their productivity and incomes.

Finally, let me underscore the value we place on our collaboration with UNCTAD, which we look forward to further strengthening. This cooperation builds on our common aim to assist our Members in their effort to implement the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda and other important fora. We are building on and leveraging our respective strengths and mandates to achieve concrete results in areas such as agricultural trade, commodities and markets, food security, investment and technology, while we are also fostering the conditions for closer collaboration on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment.

In concluding, I wish to reiterate FAO's resolve to support its Members in their pursuit of achieving food security, better nutrition and sustainable agricultural development, while working closely with all development partners.

On behalf of FAO and our Director-General José Graziano da Silva, please accept our best wishes for a successful conclusion and outcome of UNCTAD 14.

Thank you for your kind attention.