

Statement
by
Dr. Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi D-8 Secretary General at
the 4th Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on Food Security 6 December 2013,
Abuja – Nigeria

Your Excellency, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nigeria, H.E. Honorable Ministers, Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, CON

Distinguished Delegation,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Developing Eight Countries Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8), I would like to welcome you all to this important meeting, *the 4th Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on Food Security*.

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to be with you all, at the opening of this important meeting. First, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Federal Republic of Nigeria, through you, Mr. Chairman, for this well-prepared Meeting, providing us with this wonderful venue in capital city of Abuja. I would also like to express my appreciation to all delegates for their presence and for their contribution during Working Group Meetings and the Senior Official Meeting.

Distinguished Delegates,

As the outline, I would like to draw briefly some highlights and challenges of current situation of world food and agriculture. From 2007 to 2012, a food price crisis followed by the financial crisis, global economic recession, and drought in several prominent agricultural countries pushed the number of hungry and undernourished people in the world to unprecedented levels, reaching a peak in 2009 of more than 1 billion. In 2012, around 15% of the population in developing countries were undernourished, slightly decreased from 16% in 2009 but still well above the target set by the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve to 10% the proportion of undernourished between 1990 and 2015.

FAO's most recent estimates indicate that 12.5% of the world's population is undernourished in terms of energy intake, yet these figures represent only a fraction of the global burden of malnutrition. An estimated 26% of the world's children are stunted, 2 billion people suffer from one or more micronutrient deficiencies and 1.4 billion people are overweight, of whom 500 million are obese. Multiple types of malnutrition, which may coexist within the same country, household or individual, burden most developing countries.

Distinguished Delegates,

In today's economic environment, we are facing the harsh realities of global economic and food crisis, which have created hunger and under-nourishment for one sixth of the world's population. Now, please allow me to brief our recent cooperation in the field of D-8 agriculture cooperation. D-8 successfully held its ***Third Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on Food Security*** on 3 - 5 October 2012 in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

The main motive behind that meeting was reiterating D-8 commitment towards food security, particularly in increasing food supplies, advancing sustainable agricultural- led growth, keeping food price affordable, sharing common food reserves and the enhancement of the income of the small farmers, fishermen and rural populations.

A document called "***Mataram Initiatives***" which was adopted by the Third Ministerial Meeting provides a rational approach to determine the scope of cooperation between D-8 governments and private sectors through mutual public-private partnership to ensure availability of quality seeds, animal feeds, fisheries and fertilizers.

Since then, the working groups and committees established by our prime mover countries in all strategic issues of food security have continued their works on joint projects and programs. Moreover, I am also of the firm belief that private sector active engagement in our collective agricultural cooperation will play a significant role in improving the situation rapidly, with clear positive impact on the state of distribution of income and wealth in the D-8 member countries. We should certainly take it upon us to work towards this end - both individually and collectively.

Distinguished Delegates,

In view of the present global financial and food crisis, the key challenge is to secure adequate resources for the necessary long-term investments in agriculture and rural development through better-coordinated support from the international community, which can be sustained over an extended period. Five key initiatives — seed bank, fertilizers, animal feed, standards & trade issues and marine and fisheries — have been outlined in the ***Kuala Lumpur Initiative*** (2009), ***Tehran Initiative*** (2011), and ***Mataram Initiative*** (2012) to address sustainable agricultural growth and food system transformation.

I strongly believe that deeper arrangements stipulated from our previous works, for instance cooperation between private institutions and businessmen in creating public- private partnerships, are necessary to promote sustainable agricultural growth and food production in D-8 Community. In addition, broaden and deepen cooperation in this critical area and stress the importance of collaborative efforts, inter alia, on development of effective food supply chains, feasibility study on nutrition, and food systems transformation are also imperative as coherent agenda of D-8 agricultural cooperation in the near future.

In the sense of the expansion of our agricultural cooperation in the international fora, we have agreed with the AARDO (African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO) on a Memorandum of Understanding covering a wide range of areas of development-related activities, with special emphasis on agriculture and food security. Within this line, today, here in Abuja, and at the margins of the Ministerial Meeting, the M.O.U. will be signed by the AARDO Secretary-General and myself.

I do really hope that the MoU will provide pragmatic strategy to achieve the expansion of our agricultural cooperation as well as sharing lesson learned between both organizations experiences, including the human resource development, joint implementation of development projects, sharing information, knowledge and resources, promotion of agri-trade and networking.

With above in mind, I believe that this is the high time for us to focus in agricultural projects in very concrete terms in order to sustain agricultural growth among the member countries. In today's meeting, I do really hope that the major product of our meeting, namely "*Abuja Initiative*", will provide coherent policies to achieve selfreliance and self-sufficiency at the D-8 national level in food production.

Distinguished Delegates,

Coming to the end of my remarks, let me underline that I find reassuring that diverse and integrated farming systems and landscapes that are based on agro-ecological farming practices can present a robust pathway towards climate-smart agriculture, in times of a steadily growing world population and increasing resource competition. Yet, without the necessary institutional and policy adjustments, the way towards more climate-smart production systems will be long, if not impossible.

In order to accelerate this process, and to facilitate policy decision-making, science and traditional knowledge need to be integrated to inform and engage all stakeholders alike in D-8 Member Countries. Key to this is a robust and practical, yet holistic, assessment of successful integrated farming systems and landscapes and their institutional and policy requirements based on system-oriented thinking.

I sincerely hope that this august gathering will be positioned well enough to

accommodate the wishes' and aspirations of our great people in member countries in providing basic needs for sufficient food consumption and production as well as guaranteeing that everyone has proper access to the food for a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family.

I am confident that through our constructive cooperation, we will succeed in reaping the fruits of our endeavors in the near future. Once again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and through you, the government and people of Nigeria for hosting this important meeting and for their hospitality and I wish you all success in your endeavors and deliberations.

Thank you very much for your attention.