



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

33rd Session of the FAO Regional Ministerial Conference for Africa (Rabat, Morocco)

Opening Statement

By

Dr QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General

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*His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco,
His Excellency, the Chairperson of the Conference,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I wish to convey my deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this Regional Ministerial Conference.
2. Your warm hospitality is deeply rooted in your nation's character, making us feel truly welcomed here in Rabat.
3. Your generous hospitality is also a reflection of the solid partnership between FAO and Morocco.
4. Unfortunately, since we met at the last Regional Ministerial Conference for Africa in Malabo two years ago, hunger in Africa has increased, driven largely by the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic shocks, the climate crisis, and ongoing conflicts.
5. Twenty years ago, in 2004, African leaders adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme through the Maputo Declaration.
6. Ten years ago, in 2014, they reaffirmed their commitment to end hunger through the Malabo Declaration.
7. Yet today, in 2024 – thirty years later - hunger is on the rise and over a billion people in Africa are unable to afford a healthy diet.

8. We are meeting at a critical moment which requires our urgent and collective action.
9. Despite the many challenges, I remain optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead.
10. Africa boasts the largest area of arable land of any continent and is abundant in natural resources.
11. Africa's young people offer extraordinary potential.
12. And the African nations' recommitment to the post-Malabo agenda re-confirms your political will.
13. However, realizing this potential requires strategic partnerships, greater investments, and harnessing the power of digital technologies to drive efficiency and productivity in Africa's agriculture sectors.
14. We must chart a new course, now. Together.
15. It is through the transformation of Africa's agrifood systems transformation that we can unlock the benefits across food security and nutrition, the economy, equality, the environment, and resilience.
16. The urgent need for agrifood systems transformation is central to the discussions at this Regional Ministerial Conference, and the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 is a roadmap towards more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable agrifood systems,
17. For better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.
18. The Four Betters are not just a vision - they are a call to action.

Dear Colleagues,

19. Since we met two years ago, we have completed the first biennium of implementing the Strategic Framework.
20. We have committed to **better production** in Africa through our work on digitalization of agriculture sectors, green-powered irrigation, and sustainable mechanization.
21. Ten African countries are now participating in the FAO 1000 Digital Villages Initiative.
22. In southern Africa, the Agricultural Information Management System (AMIS) has been rolled out across 16 countries. The system was developed by FAO and provides policymakers and

planners access to reliable and timely agricultural information for better planning and decision-making.

23. We have invested in innovative technologies, such as in Rwanda where together with the European Union we are using drones to deliver quality germ cells for livestock reproduction.
24. In Côte d'Ivoire, we are working with the private sector to turn food waste into organic fertilizer using the larvae of black flies.
25. In the United Republic of Tanzania, DNA sequencing and barcode labelling are being used to preserve the integrity of avocado seedlings.
26. Twenty-nine African countries have joined the FAO One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) initiative to develop profitable green value chains for special agricultural products.
27. Under the One Health approach, more than 50 laboratories in Africa have been enhanced with better equipment and training.
28. With the African Union Inter-African Bureau of Animal Resources, we are developing a comprehensive database on fisheries and aquaculture in Africa that will help eliminate longstanding challenges in data accessibility.
29. Together with ECOWAS, FAO commissioned a scoping study in five African countries for a One Million Silos program for West Africa and the Sahel, which aims to increase storage capacity from 500 000 to 1 million tons by 2026, with big payoffs for **better nutrition**.
30. Through the FAO Green Cities Initiative, and our contributions to the Great Green Wall, we are promoting a **better environment** for Africa, including green jobs and urban food gardens.
31. These are just some of the recent highlights in Africa, which are detailed in the new publication 'FAO in Africa – Highlights in 2023'.
32. We have also mobilized over USD 91 million from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for projects in Africa.
33. The partnerships and portfolios with the GEF and the GCF have grown exponentially in Africa in response to countries' needs to access climate financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
34. Thirty-six sub-Saharan African countries have now joined the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative, and investment plans for Africa now exceed USD 12 billion.
35. FAO's strategic collaboration with resource and technical partners in Africa has enabled greater dynamism and agility in the region and we aim to continue that positive trajectory.

36. Our partner in this event, the Kingdom of Morocco, stands as a leading example in agrifood systems transformation, for the region and beyond.
37. With modernization and diversification at its core, Morocco has made significant strides such as, among others, investing in modern irrigation systems, greenhouse cultivation and aquaculture; expanding fruit and vegetable production for domestic and export markets; and modernizing its olive oil production to become one of the top global producers.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

38. Let us use this Regional Ministerial Conference as a platform to exchange knowledge and best practices, to the benefit of all African countries.
39. Each country must take its own lead in transforming its agrifood system, and FAO stands ready to support you on this important journey.
40. Your input over the next days will be critical in progressing your national pathways, as well as shaping our collective efforts,
41. By identifying the priorities for your region over the next biennium.
42. Let us do more and better together, for **a better life** for all Africans across the continent, leaving no one behind.
43. Thank you.