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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

**Thirty-fifth Session**

**21-22 September 2020<sup>1</sup>**

**Statement by Chairperson of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference  
for the Near East**

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In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful  
Prayers and Peace be upon Prophet Mohamed, his family and companions  
Excellencies Ministers  
Excellency Dr. Qu Dongyu  
Director General, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)  
Excellency Mr. Khalid Mehboob  
Independent Chair of the FAO Council  
Excellency Mr. Tiensin Thanawat  
Chair of the Committee of the World Food Security (CFS)  
Excellencies Ambassadors, Delegates and Permanent Representatives

Peace be upon you

1. At the inauguration of the Ministerial Meeting of the 35th Session of the FAO Near East Regional Conference, I am honored to recognize your engagement, Honorable Excellencies, in the proceedings of this vital meeting and to appreciate, on your behalf, the efforts of His Excellency the Director General of the FAO and his new instructions to hold the Regional Conferences and the Ministerial Meetings in the

<sup>1</sup> Rescheduled from 2-4 March, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

region having in mind the advancement of the work system and the strengthening of partnerships to ensure the implementation of regional and national initiatives and programs and the follow-up on their performance in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*Excellencies, Distinguished participants*

2. The precautionary measures adopted due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected the food production and supplies in the countries of the Region, according to the reports of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the international border closure, the transport constraints and the quarantine processes had their impacts on the international trade of food products and supplies around the world, especially in the countries of the region that are most affected by the pandemic and those affected by the rising food insecurity. The affected logistic services related to the food movement made it more difficult to access agricultural and fish products and increased the food loss and waste. Moreover, some countries of the region are facing surges of Desert Locust and floods, and their impact on the food security system, corner stone of the economic development in the Region, especially at times of conflicts.

Excellencies, Distinguished participants

3. Undoubtedly, Regional Conferences strengthen the regional coherence by sharing views on the regional challenges and priorities, hence we value the working methodology adopted by the FAO in convening a series of preparatory Regional Consultative Technical Meetings (RCTMs) in January and July 2020, including virtual meetings, to ensure the prior preparation to this Ministerial Meeting that features a number of regional topics, notably the food systems' transformation to achieve the SDGs and respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the FAO "Hand-in-Hand initiative: a new approach", up to the adoption of the Ministerial declaration.
4. In conclusion, I would like to sincerely commend the efforts exerted by His Excellency the Director General of the FAO in strengthening and enhancing the intraregional cooperation, looking forward to an ongoing and sustainable cooperation. Appreciation is also extended to Excellencies Heads of Delegations for their participation in the Conference.
5. May your efforts be crowned with success for the good of the people of the Region.

Peace be upon you.