



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Thirty-sixth Session

10-13 January 2022 and 7-8 February 2022

**Statement by the Chairperson of the 36th Session of the Regional
Conference for the Near East**

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

RNE NERC Secretariat
FAO-RNE-NERC@fao.org

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

Your Excellency the Prime Minister

Your Excellencies honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency Mr Independent Chairperson of the Council,

Your Excellency Mr Director-General of FAO,

Your Excellencies honourable Ambassadors,

Honourable Delegates,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour for me to welcome you to the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East and, for those who were able to join in person, welcome you to Baghdad. I thank you for your participation and commitment to this important Conference.
2. After two years, our region continues to face the far reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including on the working modalities of our Regional Conference which this year is held in hybrid modality with precautionary health measures in place.
3. As we have all seen, the impacts of the pandemic on food production and food security has compounded the multiple intersecting risks our countries face as a result of conflict, climate change, resource degradation, transboundary plant and animal pests and disease to name a few.
4. As a result, our region is the only region in the world where extreme poverty is still on the rise. Levels of undernourishment and food insecurity have deteriorated in the majority of NENA countries and the triple burden of malnutrition continues to endure along with a clear and persistent gender gap.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. I would like to thank His Excellency Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed Al-Habsi, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources of the Sultanate of Oman for his excellent Chairmanship of the previous, thirty fifth, session of the Regional Conference Regional Conference
6. In its thirty fifth session, the Region Conference endorsed four regional priorities which form the backbone of FAO's programme of work in the region as well as the COVID-19 response and recovery programme.
7. I also take this opportunity to highlight the important initiatives launched by FAO Director General Dr. Dongyu including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, Digital Village Initiative and the One Country One Product initiative which have already started implementation in several countries across the region. I would like to commend the efforts of Dr. Dongyu in transforming FAO to be more agile, fit-for-purpose and innovative.

8. I am pleased to see that the recommendations emerging from the Senior Officers Meeting addressed the range of critical challenges faced by the region, adopting a transformative agenda for regional agricultural and food systems with a focus on sustainable, resilient and nutrition-sensitive agricultural and food systems to reduce hunger and poverty and eradicate all forms of malnutrition.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. An important outcome of this meeting is to elicit the views of Honorable Ministers and Conference Members on the role and efficacy of FAO - guided by the Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and the regional priorities - in supporting countries to overcome the complex challenges faced and achieving food security and nutrition through sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.
10. The Regional Conference brings together major stakeholders and actors to strengthen joint action and its outcomes must be fully owned by Your Excellencies and Members.
11. I look forward in this Ministerial Session to identify concrete recommendations and guidance on issues of great regional importance including water scarcity, resilience building and disaster risk reduction, decent employment for youth and women, gender equality, sustainable agriculture for small scale producers, transboundary plant and animal pests and disease, agribusiness and value chain development, nutrition and food trade as well as food loss and waste.
12. On all of these critical issues there is a need and an opportunity to work together to accelerate efforts to overcome challenges and leverage the opportunities of agrifood system transformation.
13. Once I again I thank you all for your participation in this important forum and hope for fruitful and productive deliberations as well as continued and strengthened regional cooperation to achieve our common vision embodied by the SDGs for a peaceful, prosperous and food secure region.