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Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Your Excellency, Henryk Kowalczyk, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Poland.

FAO Director-General, Dr Qu Dongyu

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

I am delighted to address you today at FAO's 33rd Regional Conference for Europe. Allow me to start by thanking the honourable Minister of Agriculture and the Government of Poland for hosting us here in Łódź

As I have done at all of FAO's Regional Conferences this year, I want to again pledge our full commitment to work hand in hand with FAO and the entire United Nations (UN) system towards the goals we share of *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life* for a world free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

This session takes place in a different world from the one we had at the start of this year. When we were just starting to see light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel, we are now confronted by a man-made, avoidable, destabilizing disaster in Europe – the long-term damage of which is only just beginning to be fully grasped.

Conflicts around the world are the biggest impediment to our achieving the 2030 Agenda, including on ending hunger and malnutrition. However, the military aggression against Ukraine is not just one more conflict. All are regrettable, avoidable and condemnable; but this war has a systemic global impact in terms of production, access, utilization, stability and sustainability of food.

Not only is this war resulting in the deaths and injury of thousands of people in Ukraine, it is also affecting hundreds of millions of people around the world who must now contend with higher food costs and reduced access to healthy diets, and with rising prices and unavailability of energy and fertilizers. As it is usually the result of conflict, the most vulnerable, poor and excluded will be hit hardest.

The first strategy to fight hunger, the most effective and least costly, is peace.

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

In the meantime, the effects of this war on global hunger must be minimized.

The grains and oilseeds produced in the Black Sea region must be shipped and traded, including supplying the WFP and humanitarian aid.

Smallholders and family farmers around the world must have access to, and must afford the fertilizers and seeds they need for the next harvests.

Agrifood systems transformation needs to speed up to make them resilient, equitable, sustainable, and inclusive.

Honourable Ministers, the pandemic has exposed some of the risks, fragilities, inequalities and strengths characterizing agriculture and food systems, and prompted the global community to rethink the way food is produced, processed and consumed. I commend the leadership that you and your countries have provided, and are still providing, in dealing with COVID-19 and its impacts on our agrifood systems. It gives me comfort that you will provide similar leadership to address the impacts of this latest conflict on our global food supply.

You can count on the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which was reformed in 2009 precisely to respond to such crises. The Committee stands ready to serve its mission as an open, inclusive, intergovernmental platform where governments meet with other stakeholders to coordinate policies and address long-term structural causes of hunger and malnutrition, including crises.

The Committee is the global multilateral platform dedicated to food security and nutrition that includes not just 133 governments - including most of your countries here today, but all relevant UN agencies – notably, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), and UN Nutrition, civil society, private sector, Indigenous Peoples and farmer organizations, philanthropic organizations, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), international financial institutions (IFIs), and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. Moreover, effective policy-making needs to be based on solid technical and scientific expertise, which we receive from the Committee's independent High Level Panel of Experts.

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

I have communicated to the UN Secretary-General, FAO Director-General and WFP and IFAD principals that the CFS is ready to assist in the concerted efforts of the international community through the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

As agreed by the Bureau of the Committee, the CFS will convene an intersessional High Level meeting in July, to make its inclusive platform serve to enhance global policy coordinated responses, in full synergy with the efforts by FAO, the United Nations and the Secretary.

I welcome all Members to make full use of CFS and its policy guidance to move our food systems toward ones that can absorb the kind of shocks we are witnessing and redress the obvious vulnerabilities of our current system.

Over the past 12 years since its reform, governments and key stakeholders have used the CFS intergovernmental platform to coordinate global policies to address systemic and structural causes of hunger and malnutrition.

These include our Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests; Principles of Responsible Agriculture Investments; Framework for Action in Protracted Crises; policy recommendations on climate change, on water, on connecting smallholders to markets, and much more. Last year, the Committee endorsed Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and Policy Recommendations on Agro-ecological and other Innovative Approaches which are in line with the priority issues identified for the Europe and Central Asia region that highlight the need to gain balance among agrifood systems, the environment and natural resources as well as the need to promote healthy diets and to give focus and voice to consumers.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

These CFS policy guidelines are negotiated and agreed upon in an inclusive process that engages your senior officials in capitals and your representatives in Rome. As such, these are your resources, your instruments to be adopted and utilized in the formulation of policies, strategies, legislation, regulatory frameworks and business models.

It is now time to work together in harmony and solidarity in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, and the CFS plays a crucial role in achieving this goal.

If your country is not a member of CFS, I warmly encourage you to join and be part of this family. It is easy, it is free, and it is meaningful.

In conclusion, allow me to once again thank FAO Director-General Dr QU Dongyu, the FAO Regional Office in Budapest, Hungary, Honourable Henryk Kowalczyk, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Poland for hosting us, and you, honourable Ministers and officials, for your continued support to, and partnership with the CFS.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to warmly invite you to join us at the Annual Plenary of the Committee from 10-13 October, this year, in Rome where we plan to endorse new policy guidance on gender and youth, and much more.

Thank you, all.