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

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu,

Honourable Ministers,

Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union, Josefa Sacko,

Excellencies,

It is my pleasure to address all of you today here in Malabo, a city that is synonymous with Africa's vision of an agriculture sector that achieves its full potential of powering her socio-economic development.

I thank the Government and people of Equatorial Guinea - through the honorable Minister – for their gracious hospitality as host.

Director-General of FAO, Dr. QU Dongyu, I take this opportunity to once again assure you of our full commitment to work hand in hand with FAO and with the entire UN system, towards the goal we share of better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life for a world free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We do not take the ability to meet here in-person for granted. COVID-19 which made such meetings impossible over the last two years, shuttered lives and livelihoods. In its wake, 161 million people were left severely food insecure, worsening an already bad situation.

Nowhere else have we seen governments respond to the pandemic like they did here in Africa which greatly reduced fatalities. I commend all of you for the leadership and fortitude you showed, within your means, in the face of such a daunting challenge.

Regrettably, when we were starting to see light at the end of the tunnel of the pandemic, we are now confronted by a senseless war in Ukraine. All projections indicate that the conflict will have negative systemic impacts on food production, availability, stability and access.

It will hit the poorest and most vulnerable across the globe including here in Africa, as our food systems are interconnected.

This conflict, and all other conflicts around the world, are regrettable and avoidable. We ALL need to do everything in our hands to respond to its immediate impact, to secure smallholder and family farmer's next harvests, and speed up the transformation of our agrifood systems making them more resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

Honourable Ministers, given your countries' commendable response to COVID-19, I believe Africa will show similar leadership to address the impact of this conflict on global food supply.

Director-General, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa, the cradle of humankind, faces a confluence of challenges and opportunities that should be addressed and harnessed simultaneously.

- Africa is now the region with the second highest number of hungry and malnourished people in the world after East Asia – about 282 million people.
- The continent is one of the worst-affected regions from climate change
- Africa continues to experience conflicts in different countries.

On the other hand:

- CAADP, coordinated through the leadership of the African Union, offers what might be the most coordinated continental agricultural development blueprint harnessing the potential of your smallholder farmers and SMEs.
- It is a central component of the global efforts to achieve the SDGs, and a driver of your bold Africa-2063 vision.
- The CAADP model inspires countries across the world.
- It is heartening to see your countries put themselves through a transparent evaluation process through the biennial review like the one you recently concluded.

- The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) offers an opportunity of a lifetime for African countries to increase trade between themselves and grow prosperity.
- The youthfulness of the continent also offers an opportunity especially in the use of disruptive innovations to transform the continent's agriculture.

I do not exaggerate if I say the future of Africa is being the cornerstone of sustainable global food security.

Excellencies,

The Committee on World Food Security was established in 1974 and reformed in 2009 to serve as the food governance body of the United Nations where governments and key stakeholders gather to coordinate global policies to address systemic and structural causes of hunger and malnutrition.

Since 2009, over 133 Members States of the UN that are members of the Committee - including most of your countries, working with other stakeholders have used the CFS platform to agree on important global policy frameworks that are available for your use as resource to address most of these issues and opportunities I highlighted.

In the next few minutes, I would like to share some reflections on how the agreements our governments reached in the CFS can be useful for the achievement of the 4 Improvements that articulate the FAO Strategic Framework in your countries.

First, on building agency for better production and nutrition

Family farmers are the cornerstone of rural prosperity; the basic cell of inclusive and equitable agrifood systems providing healthy food while reducing poverty across the rural-urban continuum; custodians of more resilient value chains; and stewards and usually sustainable managers of natural resources and territories. Together with small and medium enterprises (SMEs), these farmers are responsible for about 80% of the food we eat globally.

To support them, I encourage you to, among others, use the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS RAI), the Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and the CFS policy recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets.

Nutrition must be at the core of our priorities. I am thrilled to see the extent to which we have internalised in just a few years the importance of adequate nutrition in the early years of a child's life.

I recognize how many of your governments and the AU Commission have ambitious programmes and policies in this regard, fully in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition that we agreed at the CFS last year.

Second, on investments in ecosystem restoration for a more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems transformation in Africa

Sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems are the ones that will thrive in the future. They provide decent work and livelihoods, end rural poverty, preserve and restore ecosystems, biodiversity, soils and capture carbon. They must be put at the core of our vision of prosperity.

The CFS' Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches we agreed upon in June 2021 may provide guidance to your countries and stakeholders to improve the sustainability of agriculture and food systems.

Global investors and consumers are increasingly seeking responsible investments on sustainable food systems, aligned with the SDGs. Trade will increasingly provide opportunities to sustainable agrifood systems. They can increase short and long-term competitiveness, value addition and productivity to African farmers and agribusinesses, and unleash the advantage of African Continental Free Trade Area and future free trade continent-to-continent agreements.

We must fully harness the momentum generated by the UN Food Systems Summit and refrain from looking at issues in isolation. Face the current food crisis, without losing sight of our long-term vision.

The national pathways initiated by the Summit are a sure bet for achieving SDG 2 and all the other SDGs in an integrated manner that considers all relevant issues including land tenure, soils, biodiversity, climate, landscapes, rural prosperity, social justice and the empowerment of smallholders and family farmers.

Guided by national SDGs strategies, an integrated with Nationally Determined Commitments and National Adaptation Programs of Action, your country-led pathways will attract climate and development finance, private and public.

Third, on placing women, youth and the poor at the forefront of inclusive agrifood systems

Nowhere else is the role of women and youth in agri-food systems as critical as it is in Africa. They serve as smallholder farmers and producers, workers, traders and SMEs owners. They need to be empowered to fully realize their potential.

To this end, our governments are currently negotiating Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment and policy recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems, both to be endorsed at CFS 50 in October 2022.

I encourage your countries and all stakeholders to continue engaging in this process and use the guidelines, and the policy recommendations once endorsed, as a useful and relevant tool to address gender and youth issues at the national level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CFS policy guidelines I highlighted are your resources and your policy tools to be adapted and utilized in the formulation of your national policies, strategies, legislation, regulatory frameworks and business models. They are negotiated and agreed upon in an inclusive process that engages your senior officials in capitals and your representatives in Rome.

CFS is your platform to connect the local and national level reality of your countries, to global efforts. It is a space for you to share your efforts, showcase your progress, present your National Pathways and national strategies, learn from each other across regions and to connect with resource and technical partners, and other stakeholders.

I warmly invite those countries in this region that are not yet members of CFS 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 QU Dongyu, the FAO Regional Office in Accra, Ghana, Madame Francisca Eneme Efua, Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forests and Environment of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, for hosting us, and you, honourable Ministers, for your continued support to, and partnership with CFS.

I warmly invite you, excellences, to join your peers from other regions at the Annual CFS Plenary in October this year at the FAO Headquarters, in Rome.

Thank you, all