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

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Your Excellency Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister for Agriculture and Plantation Industries of Sri Lanka,

FAO Director-General, Mr QU Dongyu,

Honourable Ministers, distinguished colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen,

1. As Chair of the Committee on World Food Security, I am delighted to speak to you today on this important occasion – the first of the five FAO Regional Conferences to be held in 2024.
2. I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the host country, Sri Lanka, and all the organizers for their meticulous efforts in hosting this significant gathering.
3. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Director-General of FAO, Mr QU Dongyu, for this invitation and the privilege to engage with you on the multidimensional nature of the drivers of food insecurity and nutrition.
4. In the face of multiple challenges, the CFS plays a critical role as a platform for dialogue in supporting regional and national efforts to achieve sustainable food security and nutrition.
5. The CFS guidelines and policy recommendations of particular relevance to the Asia-Pacific region include those on data, responsible investment, climate resilience, youth, nutrition, sustainable agricultural production and livestock, food loss and waste and the right to food guidelines.
6. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for instance, has developed a regional framework for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems (RAI) that is aligned with the CFS RAI Principles, with initiatives in Vietnam, Indonesia and Laos.
7. The *Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure* of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) have been widely disseminated and taken up by various government bodies to inform legal reform processes from national to subnational levels, and operationalized through numerous projects in Asia, including notable efforts in Mongolia and the Mekong region.
8. In Laos, a series of regional and national consultations were held in 2023 using the *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition* (VGFSN) to promote and guide an inclusive dialogue among different institutions, sectors and all relevant stakeholders to shape the National Action Plan on Sustainable Food Systems.
9. Prospects for the development of similar projects demonstrate the scalability and adaptability of CFS policy agreements to different regional and national contexts. The most recent policy agreements adopted by consensus at the CFS Plenary focus on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems, gender equality, and Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) data collection and analysis.
10. The *CFS Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition* encourage public policies for the establishment of an enabling environment that can channel the energy and skills of youth to make agriculture and food systems more sustainable, and promote improved food security and nutrition outcomes.
11. The *Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition* provide concrete policy guidance for integrating a gender perspective at all levels of agriculture and food systems. These guidelines enhance policy coherence within food security and nutrition agendas, promote coordination and mutually reinforcing actions to address the root causes of gender inequalities and all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls that negatively impact food security and nutrition.

The *Policy Recommendations on Strengthening the Collection and Use of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Data and Analysis Tools* aim to reinforce the capacity of stakeholders, particularly

governments, to collect, analyse and use quality FSN data. The goal is to promote effective, inclusive and evidence-based decision making to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, with the potential to positively impact the lives and livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. The lack of data on food security and nutrition, particularly in the Pacific region, was highlighted as one of the key issues at the APRC Senior Officers Meeting.

12. Overall, the work of the CFS over the next four years will be guided by the Multi-Year Program of Work for 2024-2027. This recently adopted programme of work focuses on four areas: enhancing equity and inclusiveness; fostering resilience; promoting actions that protect the planet; and, strengthening means of implementation.

13. Each thematic activity planned under these areas is strategically designed to address one or more of these regional and global challenges. In doing so, the CFS seeks to actively contribute to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food and the achievement of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

One focus of the current programme of work is to explore the effective application of broad policy guidelines in different countries and regions, including in the Asia-Pacific region. This effort is aligned with the specific challenges and priorities discussed at this Regional Conference and will incorporate those matters raised at the Special Ministerial Meeting for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). In this regard, I look forward to further discussions during the Ministerial Round Tables.

14. The CFS remains firmly committed to working with FAO to support you as policymakers, and to engage with regional and national stakeholders to develop comprehensive food security and nutrition (FSN) policies and strategies. The collaboration of the Rome-based agencies extends to the dissemination of CFS policy tools at the regional and country levels, with significant support from FAO, WFP and IFAD. These agencies provide substantial financial, technical and policy support to the CFS Programme of Work.

15. In the spirit of collaboration, I strongly encourage all member countries to actively take part in the implementation of the recommendations made by this Committee into national strategies – together, we can move forward to achieve our common goals.

To those countries that are not yet members of CFS, I extend a warm invitation to join the CFS family. Your active participation and contributions are critical to shaping the global dialogue on food security and nutrition. As we strive for further progress, I encourage Ministers to actively participate in the high-level segment of the upcoming CFS 52 Plenary, this October. In this forum, we will have the opportunity to collectively advance discussions, share lessons learned and shape policy priorities that will contribute to the global effort to achieve sustainable food security.

16. As I conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants, speakers and organizers for their invaluable insights. Let's foster sustained collaboration and strengthen our commitment to achieving our regional and global goals to end hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

17. Thank you for your dedication and support,

18. **H.E. Ambassador Ms Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile, Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**