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*IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety*

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Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of FAO Director General, Mr Jacques Diouf, it is both a great pleasure and an honor for FAO to contribute to the critical international efforts to strengthen global nuclear safety through this important international event. Mr. Diouf regrets that he could not be here today, but he has conveyed his strong support for this event and the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to conduct a system-wide study on the implications of the Fukushima accident and to emphasize the need to strengthen the capacity of the relevant international organizations. I feel this is particularly important in regard to the historical and cooperative relationship between IAEA and FAO in preparing for and responding to nuclear and radiological emergencies affecting food and agriculture.

The earthquake and tsunami events of 11 March in Japan have caused the loss of thousands of lives and extensive damage and destruction to many homes and buildings. We at FAO extend our support to the Japanese people at this difficult time. FAO is committed to mobilizing its knowledge and expertise in food and agriculture so that it can continue to support Japanese efforts to address the devastating losses resulting from these events, especially the effects of radioactive contamination on food safety, food control and agricultural production systems.

FAO's efforts are based on a coordinated and comprehensive approach to agricultural production systems that ensure the application of good agricultural practices throughout the food chain, thereby tackling the twin challenges of food contamination by radioactive elements and the transfer of radionuclides from contaminated soils and water to crops and livestock. The role of analytical laboratories, including the FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratories in Seibersdorf, Austria for training and technology transfer, are also critical in the examination of radionuclide contamination in food, plants, soil, water and other agricultural inputs in the identification of management processes and factors which will reduce hazards arising from radionuclide contamination. These laboratories can have a strong comparative advantage in remediation and we call for the strengthening of these activities. For this, additional Member States support in funding, staffing, secondments, equipment and other resources, would be necessary.

FAO's assistance in emergency planning and response to nuclear and radiological emergencies is ensured through the Food Chain Crisis Management Framework (FCC) with strong support from the Nuclear Emergencies Crisis Network (ECN). This framework was established by FAO to improve the Organization's ability to address food chain emergencies in a holistic and inter-disciplinary manner, along with the need to strengthen internal and external partnerships, with a focus on the entire food chain, namely animal health, plant protection and food safety, but also fisheries, forestry. The harnessing of FAO's expertise across these multidisciplinary fields is crucial for discussions on food and agriculture countermeasures in immediate, medium and long term phases following a nuclear accident.

FAO's responsibilities related to nuclear and radiological emergencies are mandated through two major international conventions, namely, the conventions on *Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident* and on *Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency*, whereby FAO is responsible for advising governments in the following three main areas: (i) acceptable levels of radionuclides for products entering national or international trade, (ii) measures to minimize the impact of radionuclides on food and agricultural production, and (iii) the development of emergency procedures for alternative agricultural practices and for decontamination of agriculture, fisheries and forestry products, soil and water. FAO is also a contributor to and co-sponsor of the *Joint Radiation Emergency Management Plan of the International Organizations*. This Joint Plan is critical in outlining the involvement and objectives of FAO response, including its roles and responsibilities, operations and preparedness arrangements, and the interfaces between FAO, other international organizations and Member States.

The successful implementation of these obligations is highly dependent on FAO's long-standing and successful partnership with IAEA through the Vienna-based Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture. The Joint Division plays a critical role in the continued collaboration and coordination between IAEA and FAO to assist Member States to respond effectively to nuclear emergencies. This Joint Division activities, in close collaboration with other FAO technical expertise in animal production and health, food safety and nutrition, crop production and protection, fisheries, forestry, and emergency operational capacities, include the provision of training and support and the development, coordination and implementation of procedures and response mechanisms that relate to the management and implementation of agricultural countermeasures and remediation strategies against radionuclide contamination.

I am pleased to report to you the recent and on-going activities related to the Japanese nuclear emergency undertaken by FAO through the Joint Division and Divisions in charge of crops, animal production and health, food safety, forestry, and fisheries. These activities have helped to ensure the timely dissemination of knowledge on radioactive contamination affecting food and agriculture, including the mechanisms of such contamination, information on food monitoring and food restrictions, the interpretation of standards (including Codex) relating to radiological protection of the public and the consideration of agricultural countermeasures and remediation strategies. FAO, through the Joint Division, also provided staffing to man the FAO Desk in the IAEA Incident and Emergency Centre in Vienna and to participate in meetings of the Interagency Committee on Radiological and Nuclear Emergencies, whose purpose is to coordinate the arrangements of the relevant international intergovernmental organizations in preparing for and responding to nuclear and radiological emergencies. In a time of urgent need, the Joint FAO and IAEA Food Safety Assessment Team was quickly assembled and sent to Japan. The Team provided advice and assistance to the Japanese authorities on technical issues relating to food safety and agricultural countermeasures, including sampling and analytical strategies and the interpretation of monitoring data to ensure that reliable, continuous updates could be provided on the extent of food contamination in affected areas. In addition, the cooperation of FAO with WHO on the Codex Alimentarius and the International Network of Food Safety Authority Network (INFOSAN) was instrumental in ensuring global communication on the monitoring of food contamination with radionuclides by the Japanese authorities as well as internationally agreed guidelines levels for radionuclides in foods contaminated following a nuclear or radiological emergency.

The special challenges to be addressed by this Conference are also of critical importance to FAO, including the initial assessment of the Fukushima accident, consideration of emerging lessons and the capacity to support the further strengthening of member countries' preparedness and response to nuclear accidents and emergencies. FAO has also begun to identify emerging lessons to address future challenges in meeting its obligations to Member States, such as activities to reduce knowledge gaps for the enhancement of early notification and technical assistance, the application of appropriate food and agriculture countermeasures, including baseline data required for countermeasure selection, determination of suitable regulatory control measures for food safety and guidance to governments on strengthening food and agriculture response plans.

FAO intends to organize in the very near future, in collaboration with Japan, a technical meeting on preparedness and response to nuclear and radiological emergencies affecting food and agriculture including the application of agricultural countermeasures and remediation strategies. The objective of that meeting is to enhance FAO strategies and action plans, in the context of inter-agency agreements, to more effectively meet international obligations and assist Member States in addressing early, short, medium, and late term phases and actions regarding food, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry following a nuclear or radiological emergency including the application of appropriate countermeasure and remediation strategies to restore the production for safe and wholesome food supplies and to enhance agricultural trade. The meeting will look into activities necessary to ensure preparedness to address knowledge gaps to enhance early notification and technical assistance to Member States. The support of Member States would be needed in this activity

FAO looks forward to its continued collaboration with the IAEA and other international agencies such as WHO in assisting Member States to effectively respond to nuclear emergencies. The provision of training and support and the development, coordination and implementation of standards, management procedures and emergency preparedness and response mechanisms will help to ensure safe, wholesome and high quality foods.

Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

In closing, I would like to express FAO's appreciation for the invitation and opportunity to contribute to this important conference. FAO stands ready to provide additional assistance, as well as independent scientific advice, to support Japan and to build capacity in other Member States through both normative and operational activities. Collaborative efforts between FAO, IAEA and other international organizations will help to continue our work towards the well-being of our Member States.

Thank you.