



BANGLADESH FOOD SECURITY INVESTMENT FORUM 2010

26–27 May 2010 • Pan Pacific Sonargaon • Dhaka

Opening Address by

Hiroyuki Konuma

*Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative,
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*

Your Excellency, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, People's Republic of Bangladesh; Honourable Chairman, Dr Abdur Razzaque, Minister for Food and Disaster Management; Honourable Special Guests: Your Excellencies, Ms. Begum Matia Chowdhury, Minister for Agriculture, and Mr. Abdul Latif Biswas, Minister for Fisheries and Livestock; Dr. Rajiv Shah, Administrator of USAID Guest of Honour; Dr. David Nabarro, UN Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition; Distinguished Guests and Colleagues; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning.

On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Dr Jacques Diouf, and on my own behalf, I would like to express my pleasure to be here today at the Bangladesh Food Security Investment Forum. I wish to convey our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh in hosting this timely and very important forum at the midst of unprecedented history of world food security problems. FAO is especially grateful to Her Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her presence here today which provides a special value to this high level forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the global economic slowdown, immediately following on the heels of the food price crisis, deprived an additional 100 million people of access to adequate food. Over one billion people, the first time in human history, are now undernourished and suffering from hunger worldwide. In Bangladesh, FAO and WFP estimated that the price hike together with the floods and cyclone of late 2007, raised the number of absolute poor by 7.5 million people and the prevalence of undernourishment to a staggering 45 percent.

Indeed, for the first time since the Green Revolution, food security and agriculture are back as a top priority of the global development agenda. We must strive to keep the momentum of this world solidarity, strong will and commitments to pursue this most fundamental human right, "the right to food."

We are very pleased and encouraged to see that major regional and international meetings have committed to increased support for agriculture, rural development and food security at national and international levels. At the G8 Summit at L'Aquila in July last year, donors committed more than US\$20 billion over 3 years to support food security and long-term agriculture development.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is undergoing a substantial renewal to make the committee the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for global citizens to work together to ensure food security and nutrition for all. It will work in a coordinated manner in support of country-led processes for food security. The CFS reform process also will ensure that all relevant voices are heard in the policy debate on food and agriculture, and that linkages are strengthened at regional, national and local levels. This reform presents a unique opportunity to improve global governance of food security.

Ladies and gentlemen, last November's World Food Summit in Rome reaffirmed this pledge and saw 180 countries, including 60 heads of State and Government, commit to ensuring urgent national, regional and global action to fully realize the target of the Millennium Development Goal and the 1996 World Food Summit goal to halve hunger by half by 2015. The commitments are reflected in the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security, which I would like to recall briefly:

- 1) Invest in country-owned plans, aimed at channeling resources to well designed and results-based programmes and partnerships.
- 2) Foster strategic coordination at national, regional and global level to improve governance, promote better allocation of resources, avoid duplication of efforts and identify response-gaps.
- 3) Strive for a comprehensive twin-track approach to food security in which direct action to immediately tackle hunger for the most vulnerable is coupled with medium and long-term sustainable agricultural, food security, nutrition and rural development programmes.

- 4) Ensure a strong role for the multilateral system.
- 5) Ensure sustained and substantial commitment by all partners to investment in agriculture, food security and nutrition.

Bangladesh has proved to be a precursor in implementing these principles. Based on its National Food Policy, the government developed a Plan of Action for the period 2008-2015, translating its objectives for securing availability, access and nutrition into 26 strategic areas of intervention, priority actions and measurable indicators. The Plan of Action was developed and is being monitored through the concerted efforts of 12 ministries/divisions in collaboration with development partners and civil society. FAO has been privileged to be associated with these government efforts together with other partners through its on-going project funded by USAID and EU.

The Government of Bangladesh has successfully embraced the twin track approach to food security as demonstrated by its timely action to the food price crisis, which entailed boosting its social safety nets to support poor consumers, while, concurrently, enhancing support to food producers and long term agriculture development. Placing agriculture at the forefront of economic and social development has been a long term priority agenda of the government which was led by Her Excellency, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and the Minister Mrs Matia Chowdhury since their previous tenures. Her Excellency and her government's role in agriculture development were highly recognized internationally and resulted in FAO issuing in 1999 the CERES Medal to Her Excellency the Prime Minister.

Ladies and gentlemen ,Bangladesh has also promoted regional and global coordination and partnership, and has been actively participating in food security initiatives under SAARC and other regional bodies. At the international level, historically, Bangladesh has played an active role in the multilateral system, and has been an active player in collaborating with multilateral agencies. With FAO, Bangladesh, over three decades of local cooperation, has fruitfully collaborated in virtually all aspects of agriculture, rural development and food security, as I have personally witnessed during my tenure as FAO Representative in this country a decade ago.

This adherence to the principles stated in L'Aquila and Rome clearly places Bangladesh in the forefront to demonstrate its leadership as a prime mover of implementing food security initiatives

through effective and well coordinated mechanisms, and to attract additional resources and effective investment for food security, agriculture and nutrition.

On the other hand, despite commitments and agreed actions affirmed at the World Food Summit and the G8 Summit at L'Aquila last year, the prospects for economic recovery are marred by clouds of a looming financial crisis with unknown longer-term implications which at times pose uncertainty about the level of commitments made by the donor community. However, it would be an injustice if we missed the successes in the fight against hunger and fail to capture the great opportunities in front of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's Forum is a step in this direction. The papers that will be discussed over next two days review issues and policies to further advance in a concerted manner towards the identification of national priority investment areas. FAO has contributed to this effort by facilitating the drafting of a Country Investment Plan. The draft Plan has been built on relevant government planning documents, including the Revised National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, the Perspective Plan 2010-2021, the National Food Policy, its Plan of Action and first Monitoring Report, the Climate Change Strategy and Plan of Action, the 6 IFPRI BIDS papers, an inventory of past and ongoing programmes and projects, and extensive consultations with Government institutions and other stakeholders. The Country Investment Plan covers food security in a comprehensive manner: encompassing availability, access and utilization of food.

The Investment Forum is a key occasion toward the finalization of a Country Investment Plan adequate to attract substantial additional external resources, including those being made available under the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP), as a complement to domestic investments in agriculture, food security and nutrition. It paves the way for the effective participation in the Regional Food Security Investment Forum for Asia and the Pacific being organized jointly by ADB, FAO and IF AD, which will take place in Manila from 7 to 9 July this year. We believe that, following the endorsement of the Country Investment Plan, Bangladesh would be able to be presented as a model country at the 36th Meeting of the Committee on World Food Security taking place in Rome next October.

While the main responsibilities for addressing the national challenges remain with the Government and its resilient farmers, I reiterate FAO's continued commitment and readiness to provide the necessary technical assistance to finalize and implement the Country Investment

Plan and to support Bangladesh's commitment to achieving food security for its people at all times.

Finally, please allow me to express once again the importance of our concerted efforts and partnership in the fight against the negative impacts of multiple crises which let one billion people to live in chronic hunger, let one child die every six seconds, and resulting in 5 million children losing their lives every year.

This is a wake up call, as the medium and long-term futures of food security are at risk with a rapid increase of the world population to 9.1 billion by 2050. Food production in developing countries has to be doubled in next 40 years to meet the growing demands of this expanding world population, while the annual average cereal production growth was stagnated to about 1% in past 10 years, as against over 2% at the time of the Green Revolution.

We need to act now and keep the momentum of our strong will and team spirit to feed the new generations to come.

Thank you.