

**Remarks by H.E. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, President of ECOSOC  
“Agriculture and Food Day” event  
03:00 p.m. Thursday, 13 July 2017; Yale Club**

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to participate in this “Agriculture and Food Day”, organised by the International Agri-Food Network and Farming First. This is an important opportunity to bring together the various voices that are essential for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 to reach zero hunger.

Throughout the discussion today, I hope we will also be able to make inter-linkages between SDG 2 and other Goals, given the importance of agriculture and sustainable food systems for people and planet.

This meeting is especially timely in the context of the 2017 High-level Political Forum, during which an in-depth review of SDG 2 is taking place alongside Goals 1, 3, 5, 9, 14 and as well as 17. I attach great importance to the HLPF in my current role as President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). I hope you have been able to follow some of its activities and events this week, and invite you to remain engaged through next week.

Further in my role as ECOSOC President, earlier this spring I convened a Special Meeting of the Council to address the question of infrastructure, industrialization and innovation. As part of the preparations for this, we explored the potential of agriculture, agro-industries and food systems to contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

In my brief remarks, I would like to convey some of the messages emerging from these processes with respect to ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition by 2030.

Distinguished guests,

Although significant progress has been made in combatting hunger and malnutrition since 2000, we have a long way to go to end hunger for all by 2030. This is especially true in my region, Africa, where close to half of the population faces moderate or severe levels of food insecurity.

The recently released Report of the Secretary-General on SDG progress states that, world-wide, 11 per cent of the population is undernourished, amounting to roughly 793 million people. Furthermore, an estimated 155 million children under 5 years of age are stunted as the result of chronic malnutrition. As the result of other forms of malnutrition, over nutrition and unhealthy diets obesity affects 41 million children under 5 years of age worldwide. Worryingly, we know that child malnutrition is not merely an indicator of ill health; it can have negative long-term repercussions on other measures of well-being, such as lower educational outcomes.

Some of these findings are particularly distressing in the context of Africa and countries in special situations, where many food and nutrition needs are undermined by both natural and human-made disasters. For example, the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel has made over 30 million people food insecure, including at least 12 million who need emergency food assistance.

We also know that there are larger structural and demographic aspects to consider in pursuit of SDG 2. For example, over 70 per cent of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas and rely on agriculture as their main source of living. This requires greater focus in supporting their enhanced access to productive resources and resilience to climate and other shocks.

Distinguished guests,

Ending hunger and improving food and nutrition security will require an integrated approach founded on a commitment to sustainable food production systems and resilient agriculture.

In our preparations for the 2017 Special Meeting of ECOSOC, my office worked closely with a UN inter-agency team to analyse the importance of agriculture, agro-industries development and resilient food systems to the 2030 Agenda. This is a critical lens through which to discuss the steps needed for ending hunger, as well as making progress on other sustainable development objectives such as eradicating poverty, ensuring healthy lives creating jobs and improving rural-urban inter-linkages.

The analysis for the ECOSOC Special Meeting underlined the indispensability of agriculture and agro-industries to food systems. As such, progress in these areas needs to prioritize inclusive growth and sustainable development, rather than narrowly promoting efficiency and productivity along the food and value chain.

With an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, policy coherence, well targeted financing innovation and partnerships, this sector has significant potential to contribute to green industrialization and sustainable development across all countries. The potential impact is especially great in the emerging and least developed countries.

Improving agricultural value chains and linking them to markets within and across countries has positive knock-on effects for people's well-being. At each link in the value chain, agri-businesses can help to generate employment, raise incomes, reduce poverty and contribute to food and energy security. In particular, sustainable agriculture and the development of agricultural value chains can be particularly beneficial for small holders, particularly rural youth and women.

It is well known that within the agro-industry sector, value is added to raw agricultural materials through processing, preparation and other processes. These could be enormous engines of future growth in developing countries. If we look at Africa, agricultural and food exports from the region are largely unprocessed. As a result, the

region fails to capitalize on adding value locally and forgoes the benefits of vital national resources.

We need to step up efforts to address this over-reliance on the export of commodities, hence Africa's commitment to structured transformation of our economies. Strong capacities and innovative partnerships need to be built to move up the value chain across Africa and other countries in special situations. Mobilizing such efforts is an urgent priority if we want to create jobs and prosperity for our populations, as well as make a dent on the prevalence of hunger.

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the challenges to achieving SDG 2, the future holds great promise. There are a number of successes and opportunities on the ground, many of which are being brought to our attention in ECOSOC through this year's HLPF and Special Meeting. These include opportunities (i) to expand the benefits of new technologies; (ii) to support and scale up agribusinesses and biotechnologies; (iii) to increase productive capacities in a sustainable manner; and (iv) to reap the demographic dividend.

Concrete steps need to be taken towards stimulating innovation and enhancing infrastructure development, including in the areas of water and sanitation, transportation, energy, irrigation and ICTs so as to support the deployment of a robust agricultural and food systems. Beyond boosting progress on SDG 2, this will foster progress on SDG 1 to eradicate poverty, as well as across all other Goals.

None of this will be achieved unless we break down silos so that we can benefit from the collective capacities in public, private and voluntary sectors. We need to build partnerships by reaching across individual areas of expertise, geographic spheres and institutional frontiers.

Many of the building blocks are already in place, they just need to be strengthened and scaled up. The importance of regional integration in the area of trade and value

chains has been repeatedly emphasized, and remains to be an area for further strengthening, particularly in the African region.

As the result of the work for the ECOSOC Special Meeting this spring, two concrete initiatives were launched in May for scaling up in response to growing demand from Member States for technical assistance in areas critical to the achievement of the SDGs. One with particular relevance to making progress on SDG 2 is known as the Accelerated Agriculture and Agro-industry Development Initiative PLUS (3ADI+). The 3ADI+ is a global development partnership based on an adaptation and revitalization of the African Agribusiness and Agro-industry Development Initiative (3ADI), launched in 2010 by FAO, IFAD and UNIDO, in partnership with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). It aims at taking advantage of expanding market opportunities in the agribusiness sector by facilitating the development of inclusive, efficient, sustainable and competitive agriculture and food value chains and market systems in developing countries.

In the process of developing agro-industries and agriculture, countries in the 3ADI+ will be able to simultaneously make strides toward sustainable and inclusive economic growth, food security and reduction of poverty and hunger. Such an initiative is a useful model for thinking about the types of holistic, joined-up approaches that are needed to realize the 2030 Agenda.

In conclusion, let me thank you for your attention. As the current President of the main coordination and guiding body of the United Nations development system, ECOSOC, I want to reiterate the Council's readiness and support to support the achievement of SDG 2.

I look forward to the discussion that will follow and to hearing further how the Council can work with you to eradicate poverty and hunger by 2030.

Thank you.