Check Against Delivery

Statement by
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Permanent Representative

Action on draft resolution: Agricultural Technology for Development
A/C.2/68/L.38 Rev.1

United Nations, New York

2 December 2013
Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the 106 co-sponsors, I wish to congratulate all the delegations that supported the "Agricultural Technology for Development" resolution. You are the "agri-pioneers" of the United Nations supporting the next wave of "agri-preneurs".

An old African proverb teaches that "knowledge is like a garden: if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested." Today's resolution is about improving the lives and livelihoods of millions of people across the developing world. It is about giving people the Midas touch through technologies like the iPod Touch.

Agriculture is about more than simply producing food, fibers and fuels; it's about helping communities flourish. In fact, agriculture is one of the most profitable commercial sectors. From the NASDAQ to the Nikkei, investors have their eyes on the stock exchange, but their ears to the ground.

The World Bank estimates that agricultural investment yields 2.5 times more benefits than investments in other sectors. From China to Nigeria, more than one billion people work in agriculture – making it the world's second-largest source of employment.

Yet, far too many farmers don't taste the fruits of financial fortune. Most of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty are found in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. These struggling farmers have been trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, but given the right conditions they can break free and unleash a sustainable agricultural revolution.

The global population is growing, and with it the need for technology to produce and preserve more food. Today's resolution will support farmers' ingenuity, imagination and innovation and will provide them with the technology to progress from poverty to prosperity.

Mr. Chairman,

Women comprise the majority of the agricultural workforce in many developing countries - they are the ones who toil in the soil. From planting to plowing and from fertilizing to harvesting, women are immersed in every aspect of agricultural production.

So why is the productivity rate of female farmers 30% lower than that of male farmers? As a result of persistent discrimination, female farmers have inferior seeds, fewer fertilizers and tools. While men receive extensive training on how to care for their crops, women are cropped out of the picture.

The developing world may seek to cultivate its natural resources, but it is wasting its greatest natural resource – its human resource. No business in any country can make healthy margins by marginalizing half the population. By investing in female farmers, we can increase crop yields by 30% and feed an additional 150 million people each year.
This year’s resolution also includes a special focus on the struggle of rural youth. Each year, more young people are abandoning their rural communities, trading fields and farms for the bright lights of the big city. This migration is contributing to over-urbanization and growing unemployment in cities across the globe.

We need to address the wave of disillusionment with rural life, and empower youth to take part in every step of the agricultural process from seed to market.

Mr. Chairman,

This sort of technology is making it easier for farmers like Gilbert Egwel to share vital information. Gilbert is a 25 year-old fruit farmer from northern Uganda who learned how to manage a fruit farm from the instructions provided on a local radio agricultural talk show.

Gilbert took what he learned and was able to sell his fruits in the local market. He receives payment through his mobile phone along with weekly updates on market prices.

Imagine if every farmer had a smartphone to check prices in competing markets. From smartphone to smart farming to smart business decisions – technology can help a farmer know about a storm brewing on the horizon or a plague of pests devouring neighboring farms. Instead of looking to the heavens to find out when the next drought is coming, they can look at the live updates in the palm of their hand.

Mr. Chairman,

Today’s resolution focuses on capacity building, education and skills transfer – the essential building blocks of development. 106 nations from the jungles of South America to the mountains of South East Asia and from the plains of Africa to the islands of Oceana recognize the vast potential of agricultural technology.

Yet there is one group of nations standing in the way of us achieving consensus on this resolution: the Arab group. Ironically, few countries could benefit more from agricultural technology than the Arab world. Across this region, people are hungry for change and thirsty for progress. Yet the Arab governments are stubbornly determined to put politics before people.

But we will not be deterred. Our focus is on the horizon – when we will see the day when all people have the training, tools, and opportunities they need to support their families and their communities.

Developing countries hold in their hands the seeds of the future – the potential for life and the potential for prosperity. From the coffee fields of Ethiopia to the rice paddies of Nepal, it is time to plant these seeds and reap the rewards. With this resolution, we are fortunate to help developing countries become masters in the field and masters of their own destiny.

Mr. Chairman,
When the State of Israel was established in 1948, our young pioneers took control of their destiny by working tirelessly to make our arid deserts bloom. Laboring day and night, they sang a famous song called Zum Gali Gali – about commitment and cooperation in the field.

Today, as we extend our hand to the developing nations of the world, this message of commitment and cooperation is just as meaningful. As the song goes:

From the dawn till setting sun
Everyone finds work to be done.
From the dawn till night does come
There's a task for everyone

Pioneers work hard on the land,
Men and women work hand in hand
As they labor all day long,
They lift their voice in song

Let us work, my friends as one
Let us work 'til the task is done.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.