Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by focusing on two pressing facts. First, nearly one billion people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger. Second, by the year 2050, the global population will climb to 9 billion and we will need to produce 70 percent more food than we do today to feed everyone.

Here at the United Nations, when we want to address hunger and extreme poverty, we must focus on agriculture and rural development.

If we concentrate our efforts on helping the rural poor produce more food and transfer it in good condition to the marketplace, we promote food security, food safety, decrease chronic hunger, drive economic growth, and create a better future for millions of people.

Mr. Chairman,

Israelis have a vast reservoir of experience to share with other nations. Since Israel is 60 percent desert, necessity drove us to look for ways to increase the quality and size of our crops, while decreasing water consumption.

Despite its arid conditions, agricultural production in Israel continues to grow. Our success is a product of the close and ongoing cooperation between researchers, extension workers, farmers, and agriculture-related services and industries.

The agricultural sector in Israel today is based almost entirely on science-linked technology, with government, academia and the private sector working together to meet challenges and seek new solutions.

Over the past 25 years, Israel’s agricultural output has increased dramatically, with barely any rise in water usage. In the process, Israel has developed extensive knowledge and expertise in agricultural systems for dry lands. Today, more than 40 percent of the country’s vegetables and field crops are grown in the desert.

Through MASHAV, Israel’s Agency for International Cooperation, we are sharing our solutions with countries around the world. Our experience has proven that when you put the right tools in farmers’ hands, the results can be far-reaching. Let me give you a few examples.

About 50 percent of every grain and pulse harvest in the developing world is lost to pests and mold, but an Israeli scientist has developed a surprisingly simple and cheap way for African and Asian farmers to keep their grain market-fresh.

Prof. Shlomo Navarro invented bags that can keep both water and air out. The bags are in use all over the developing world, including Africa and the Far East.

The invention of drip irrigation by Israeli Simcha Blass has revolutionized agriculture across the world, enabling farmers to increase their yields with less water as well as decreasing fertilizer, pesticide and energy costs. Constantly upgraded Israeli drip-irrigation techniques are regularly shared with other countries through MASHAV Israeli agro-technology companies.

An Israeli company has developed an alternative seed treatment that could revolutionize farming, protecting vegetable seeds from infestation, fungus, bacteria and even drought, without the side effects of genetic engineering.
Agriculture Development and Food Security
Statement delivered by
Ambassador Giora Becher
Permanent Mission of Israel to the UN

Mr. Chairman,

I believe the most significant intervention we can make to address the challenges ... is an investment in women.

Women comprise the majority of the agricultural workforce in many developing countries. They are involved in every aspect of agricultural production from planting to fertilizing and from weeding to harvesting.

Yet female farmers are 30 percent less productive than male farmers. The reason for this isn't because they don't work as hard; the reason is that women aren't able to access the same resources as men - they have less fertilizer, fewer tools, and poorer quality seeds. They are also at a disadvantage when it comes to training opportunities and land ownership.

It is for all of these reasons that women grow fewer crops. The results of this imbalance don't just affect the female farmer and her family; they have a negative impact on the entire community. Less food is available at markets, more people go hungry, farmers earn less money, and the cycle of poverty continues.

If we break this cycle so that all farmers - men and women alike - have access to the same resources, it is estimated that we could increase agricultural output by 30-40 percent. That would feed an additional 150 million people every year.

Mr. Chairman,

After decades in which agriculture and nutrition didn't always get the attention it deserved, we are putting the fight against global hunger where it should be, in the spotlight of global attention.

Responsible development must focus on promoting economic growth that actually helps nations develop and lifts people out of poverty. All of our efforts must be centered on creating the conditions where assistance is no longer needed, where people have the dignity and the pride of being self-sufficient.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.