Statement
delivered
by
H.E. Usman Sarki
Deputy Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations at the Second Committee Debate on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

New York, 28 October 2013

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I wish to thank you for providing us the opportunity to discuss this important agenda item. We also welcome the very useful report by the Secretary-General on this agenda item. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representatives of Fiji and Ethiopia on behalf of G77 and China, and the African Group respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2012, UNDP released its first Africa Human Development Report titled "Towards a Food Secure Future" which focused on agriculture. It was a very important and timely report. Of the many pertinent observations and recommendations made in the report, the following by Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP, particularly stood out:

(i) That "rapid economic progress in Africa has not brought food security for the substantial proportion of the population still gripped by hunger".
(ii) That "Since 2000 Africa has experienced several episodes of acute food insecurity, with immense loss of lives and livelihoods".
(iii) That "crop failure and a lack of food are not the only causes of famine and hunger. More often, the challenge is uneven access to food, which occurs when people lack the means to acquire it. This uneven access is thus a symptom of the low incomes and high levels of vulnerability that still affect many Africans."

The report also identified detrimental international practices particularly, the payment of subsidies to farmers in developed countries. More importantly, the report squarely placed responsibility for the food situation in
Africa on governance deficit and lack of empowerment of smallholder farmers in the region. Addressing these twin deficiencies in our view is the beginning of the solution for the perennial food crisis in the Continent. It is for this reason, that we welcome the Secretary-General's report, in which the need to support smallholder farmers in Africa was highlighted.

Agriculture and food security have been adversely affected by global economic crisis as well as unpredictable and extreme effects of climate change. With about nearly nine hundred million people suffering from chronic undernourishment, there is an urgent need for the global community to tackle the challenges in order to deliver the poorest and most vulnerable from extreme poverty and hunger.

The global food crisis has left many African countries severely stressed in terms of food security. As agriculture holds the key to sustainable food security, the present global food crisis should be regarded as an opportunity to accord priority to agriculture, particularly in Africa. In this context, Nigeria calls for regional and international support to strengthen the capacity of developing countries towards enhancing their productivity and the nutritional quality of food crops and the promotion of sustainable practices in agricultural activities.

Nigeria therefore, supports the partnership between the Global Alliance for Resilience initiative for the Sahel region and ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. We expect that the partnership would develop long-term strategies for addressing the endemic food crises in the Sahel. Also, we welcome the interest of the international community for a Green
Revolution in Africa and we encourage international efforts in this respect to be mainstreamed into the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), initiated by NEPAD to address issues of growth in agricultural sector, rural development and food security.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria also commends the laudable principles of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to support country-led actions aimed at achieving sustainable and resilient rural livelihood and food and nutrition security for all. We are particularly pleased to note that the comprehensive twin-track approach to food security and nutrition security of the Task Force addresses the root causes of hunger and poverty among the most vulnerable.

We also support to the “Zero Hunger Challenge” initiative of the Secretary-General launched in 2012. We are pleased to note that the initiative has generated considerable interest among governments and other key players. We believe that, for a world without hunger and malnutrition to be achieved, concerted efforts should be made at the national, regional and global levels to ensure that the present and future generations have access to affordable food. Nigeria is therefore of the opinion that food security and agricultural development should be at the forefront in national and international development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Food security and nutrition are both global challenges and national priorities. Nigeria believes that efforts at addressing food security challenges and the eradication of poverty must be nationally articulated and designed. In
this regard, the Government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has given a high-priority to food security and nutrition in Nigeria. The Government has developed an Agricultural Transformation Agenda to unlock the enormous potentials in the agricultural sector. The Agenda focuses on the key agricultural value chains to create over 3.5 million jobs. It also aims to provide USD 2 billion of additional income for Nigerian farmers particularly smallholder farmers.

Furthermore, the Government has outlined medium and long-term strategies to ensure food security. These include: the Graduate farmers’ scheme through which soft loans are given to university graduates interested in farming, support for rural agricultural development programme and irrigation schemes; the cassava bread intervention fund towards effective and sustainable 20% inclusion of cassava into wheat for bread and confectioneries. Also, the Government has mapped out a comprehensive strategy to guarantee food security and revitalize agriculture. It established a National Food Security Programme to boost domestic production of food crops and the development of agro-allied industries; approved the nation’s Science, Technology and Innovation policy towards viable industrialization of the economy with emphasis on sustainable agriculture and food security through Research and Development.

Processing food into the right constituency to retain the integrity and nutritional value of food is integral to sustainable regular supply of food, alongside the need for new and indigenous sustainable technologies to improve agricultural yield and systems. The Government is also encouraging the sustainable uses of water and to sensitize users on the need to conserve water to enhance sustainability in food production. In addition, the
Government has distributed improved varieties of food crops to farmers through its National Varietal Release Committee.

Given the pivotal role of the agricultural sector in the Nigerian economy, the Government has taken steps to address existing challenges through: (i) the provision of adequate intervention funds in the form of loans at a single digit interest rate; (ii) strengthening extension services; (iii) provision of adequate rural and value chain infrastructure; and (iv) building an adequate database of farmers and developing their capacity.

Nigeria underscores that agriculture and food security remains a fundamental pillar for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and in particular; the Millennium Development Goals. We call for more investment in agricultural research and development. We also stress the need for increased funding and investment in agricultural production.

Finally, Nigeria reiterates the need for a holistic, integrated and inclusive approach to sustainable development that promotes sustainable agriculture and food production. We therefore recommend that close attention should be paid to the remedies provided in the Secretary-General's report, and those of the UNDP Africa Human Development Report of 2012.

I thank you.