Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the G-77 & China. I wish to summarize some of the key concerns of my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

Agriculture development, food security and nutrition remains central to the every policy goals of many countries and plays a key role in the efforts of eradicating poverty and hunger and achieving sustainable development. The Rio+20 Outcome Document, “The Future We Want”, recognized the need for ensuring food security, particularly in the context of climate change, biodiversity, desertification, oceans and seas and also reaffirmed the global commitment to the right of all to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food.

We reaffirm the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s initiative, the “Zero Hunger Challenge”, which invites all nations to be boldly ambitious as they work for a future where no one goes hungry. We strongly believe that the inclusion of agriculture development, food security and nutrition in the Post-2015 development agenda remains critical to the overarching goals of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Food security has emerged as a top priority in the SDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

With its centuries old irrigation technology, Sri Lanka was once known as the “granary of the East”. Its civilization was described as a hydraulic civilization. The giant reservoirs in country’s dry zone which are still the life blood of the country’s agriculture, support a self-sufficient food production base. At present, there are 150 major irrigation schemes 250 medium irrigation schemes and 27,000 minor irrigation schemes in the country. The existing irrigation infrastructure provides water to an extent of 600,000 hectares of which about 400,000 hectares is fed from major and medium irrigation schemes.

The agricultural sector of Sri Lanka constituted 11.1% of GDP in 2012. It is one major economic factors in the country. Agriculture is the livelihood of the majority in the rural sector and contributes significantly in alleviating rural poverty. Sri Lanka’s overall agriculture production index has increased by more than 25% during the past 10 years. We have achieved remarkable progress in the rice sector.
The Global Food Security Index for 2012, has placed Sri Lanka at the 62nd position among 105 countries. Sri Lanka has now achieved the goal of self-sufficiency in rice, making the country food secure in the staple food. In 2012, Sri Lanka donated 10,000 metric tons of rice to the East African region, including Somalia and Ethiopia, through the World Food Programme, to feed tens of thousands of refugees suffering from a devastating drought and famine in 2011.

The Ministry of Agriculture which was established with the aim of promoting sustainable agriculture, to ensure food security and a prosperous farming community and also to guide national agricultural activities has been active in promoting and upgrading the agriculture in Sri Lanka.

The Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Development directly engages in the formulation of policies, strategies and plans for the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources. The fisheries sector contributes for 1.3 percent of the GDP of Sri Lanka and provides 70% of the animal protein intake in the country. The annual fish harvest in 2008 amounted to 309,000 metric tons and by 2012 it increased 57 percent to over 486,000 metric tons.

The dawn of peace in 2009 provided new opportunities to the fishing community in the North and the East of Sri Lanka to access fishing areas which had been restricted to them for more than 3 decades due to the terrorist threat. The Northern Spring (“Vadakkin Wasantham”) resettlement and rehabilitation programme has been key to the reconstruction of agriculture and irrigation infrastructure and the improvement of the manufacturing framework. This includes the reconstruction of fisheries harbors and the establishment of inland fishing projects. According to the statistics for the five year period 40% more persons got involved in the fisheries industry.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me highlight some of the key measures taken by the government to promote sustainable agriculture, in ensuring food security and elevating the nutrition of the population.

1. A Cabinet Sub–Committee on Food Security and Control of Cost of Living, chaired by His Excellency the President meets regularly to review the food situation in the country, price movements in the market and other developments.
2. National Agriculture Research Plan carries out necessary researches on rice, other field crops, vegetables and fruits.
3. The National Nutrition Policy for Sri Lanka was first developed in 1986. It is currently in the process of revision. The updated policy will provide a platform for inter-sectoral coordination in order to accelerate efforts to achieve optimum nutrition for all. The policy will also provide overall guidance for the development of national strategic plans of action for nutrition activities.
4. The “Colombo Statement on Food Security” of 2008 provides the policy guide to all SAARC countries and highlights the need to evolve and implement people-centered short to medium term regional strategies and collaborative projects.
5. The “Thriposh“ programme provides a food supplement of proteins and all other required micronutrients to the most nutritionally vulnerable segments of the population, namely
pregnant and lactating women and infants and children from 12-59 months. This was initiated in 1973 by the Ministry of Health, with the assistance of CARE, to combat incidence of child malnutrition, low birth weight, and iron deficiency.

6. Growth promotion and growth monitoring programs conducted by the Ministry of Health through Public Health Midwives (PHMs) who visit pregnant and lactating women and infants and children under five years have been instrumental in dealing with programmes to improve nutritional status with child malnutrition, iron-deficiency anemia and low birth weights and also provide nutrition education.

7. A comprehensive national strategy was developed in 1994 to supply iron, folate and vitamins to all pregnant women through Mother and Child Health (MCH) centers and clinics. These centers provide, antenatal care, screening of infants and preschool children, immunization, family planning; growth monitoring and nutritional supplementation.

8. A comprehensive national poverty alleviation programme ("Samurdhi") was established in 1994 to develop rural infrastructure facilities, improving health and nutritional conditions among rural community.

9. The National Agriculture Policy with the aim of achieving food security, ensuring higher and sustainable incomes for farmers and remunerative prices for agricultural products made significant progress in terms of food production. This included promoting home garden and urban agriculture to enhance household nutrition and income and promote women’s participation in home gardening.

10. Through the country-wide massive cultivation drive the Government has encouraged rural and urban home gardens, school gardens, gardens and model farms in office premises

11. Establishment of the Livelihood Upliftment Programme ("Divi Neguma") which aims to promote food production and home gardening programmes. This program targets 2.5 million households to create national awareness on how the household economy could contribute to the food and economic security of the country.

12. Promotion of a programme for Organic Fertilizer Production & Utilization to encourage farmers to use organic fertilizer in crop cultivation in addition to chemical fertilizer.

13. Rescheduling of loans to rice farmers whose crops were affected by adverse weather conditions and the proposal for the implementation of a Crop Insurance Scheme. Tariffs and the Special Commodity Levy on selected commodities were increased during 2013 to protect local production. A fuel support scheme for fishermen was also introduced in March 2012 to partly offset the increase in costs arising from the fuel price revision.

Mr. Chairman,

We urge the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations, with a development-oriented outcome that ensures, substantial improvement in market access and the parallel elimination of all forms of export subsidies on all export measures.

I thank you.