Statement by

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Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

India associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairperson,

The subject at hand today - that of food security - is at the heart of human development and the most pressing issue on the global sustainable development agenda.

We must spare no effort to achieve the MDG target of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015. We must also ensure that food security and nutrition remain at the centre of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Mr. Chairperson,

India feeds seventeen percent of the world’s population on less than five percent of the world’s water and three percent of its arable land.

Over a period of time, India has taken several measures to increase agricultural output and promote food security.

The National Food Security Mission launched in the year 2007 has yielded positive results.

India’s total food grain production in 2011-12 reached a record 259 million tons.

The Food Security Law that we have passed recently is the largest such effort of its kind in the world aimed at ensuring food security for our people. This law will benefit 75 percent of our rural population and half of our urban population.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the context of this debate, I would like to highlight some key issues.

First, food security - especially access to food - is directly linked with income poverty. While addressing food security, we must be cognizant of and maintain this link with poverty eradication.
At the same time, ensuring global progress towards food security and nutrition requires action along multiple dimensions. These include food availability, access, price stability, consumption and utilization and health and sanitation.

Second, while focusing on food security, we must also focus on the problem of under-nourishment and malnutrition, which is akin to a silent epidemic in many developing countries.

An estimated 26% of the world's children are stunted and 2 billion suffer from one or more micro-nutrient deficiencies. This is a challenge that requires a focused policy response.

Third, food security cannot be ensured by national action alone. In today's interconnected world, there is an important role of international systemic and structural factors which need to be looked into. Meaningfully addressing food price volatility and it's structural and root causes, including speculative practices in the commodity markets needs to be prioritized.

Fourth, we cannot achieve food security and agricultural livelihood security in developing countries if we do not urgently address the issue of revamping the distorted global rules of agricultural subsidies.

These rules have allowed OECD countries on the one hand to increase their subsidies to US $415 billion in 2012 while at the same time constraining the developing countries to benchmark the current administered prices offered to their poor farmers against an antiquated reference price based on the 1986-88 period, as a measure of subsidy.

It is important that global policy in this regard must be able to differentiate the bona fide efforts of developing countries aimed at providing basic food and nutrition to their people.

The argument that somehow subsidies are good for the rich but bad for the poor is untenable and unacceptable. We cannot have multilateral trade rules that favour the rich countries but punish the developing countries on the same issue.

It is time that we address this historical bias by ensuring that the vast millions of low income and resource poor farmers in developing countries continue to receive the necessary support and price guarantees for tilling their land and providing adequate food for the poor consumers.

It is time that the right to food is recognized as a basic human right and developing countries are allowed to devise programmes that meet this basic need.
Fifth, the central role of technology must be noted.

The Green Revolution which enabled many developing countries to augment food production and become self-sufficient was a result of international collaboration on agriculture research. We need to be able to replicate this model of multi-stakeholder research to invest in agriculture technology and spread the fruits of such collaboration widely. Flexibility in global IPR regimes will have to play a catalytic role in this process.

Sixth, crafting a purposeful global response to tackling the unacceptably high levels of food waste is critical if not central to addressing food security.

1.3 billion tons of food produced is wasted every year, amounting to over one-third of all food produced.

Most of this wastage happens in the developed countries due to unsustainable and wasteful consumption patterns. FAO estimates that per capita food waste by consumers in the developed countries works out to over 100 kilograms per year.

The scale of this problem can be gauged from the fact that wastage of food at consumer level alone in industrialized countries is nearly as much as the total food production in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is important to focus on greater efforts at awareness creation and attitudinal change in the developed world which will allow us save huge amounts of food.

There is unacceptably high level of post-harvest losses in the developing countries as well. However, this is more a function of poor infrastructure and lack of advanced technologies for production, post-harvest processing, packaging and transportation. This problem needs to be addressed by inter alia enhanced investments in rural infrastructure and transportation and storage facilities as well as better access to technologies - for production and post-harvest processing.

Finally Mr. Chairperson,

Gender equality and women’s empowerment, their social inclusion and equal access of women to economic opportunities and resources is a key determinant for food security. We must ensure that our approaches for food security fully take into account this gender perspective.

I thank you.