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REPORT

***Yangon
Myanmar
20-24
April
1998***

***Twenty-fourth FAO
Regional
Conference for
Asia and the Pacific***



**Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations**

FAO Member Nations in the Asia Region (as of 24 April 1998)

Bangladesh	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Myanmar
Bhutan	Japan	Nepal
Cambodia	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
China	Korea, Republic of	Philippines
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Laos	Sri Lanka
India	Malaysia	Tajikistan
Indonesia	Maldives	Thailand
	Mongolia	Viet Nam

FAO Member Nations in the Southwest Pacific Region (as of 24 April 1998)

Australia	New Zealand	Tonga
Cook Islands	Papua New Guinea	United States of America
Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu
France	Solomon Islands	

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific

First	- Bangalore, India, 27 July – 5 August 1953
Second	- Kandy, Ceylon, 20-25 June 1955
Third	- Bandung, Indonesia, 8-18 October 1956
Fourth	- Tokyo, Japan, 6-16 October 1958
Fifth	- Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam, 21-30 November 1960
Sixth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-29 September 1962
Seventh	- Manila, Philippines, 7-21 November 1964
Eighth	- Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-24 September 1966
Ninth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 4-15 November 1968
Tenth	- Canberra, Australia, 27 August – 8 September 1970
Eleventh	- New Delhi, India, 17-27 October 1972
Twelfth	- Tokyo, Japan, 17-27 September 1974
Thirteenth	- Manila, Philippines, 5-13 August 1976
Fourteenth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 July – 3 August 1978
Fifteenth	- New Delhi, India, 5-13 March 1980
Sixteenth	- Jakarta, Indonesia, 1-11 June 1982
Seventeenth	- Islamabad, Pakistan, 24 April – 3 May 1984
Eighteenth	- Rome, Italy, 8-17 July 1986
Nineteenth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 11-15 July 1988
Twentieth	- Beijing, China, 23-27 April 1990
Twenty-first	- New Delhi, India, 10-14 February 1992
Twenty-second	- Manila, Philippines, 3-7 October 1994
Twenty-third	- Apia, Western Samoa, 14-18 May 1996
Twenty-fourth	- Yangon, Myanmar, 20-24 April 1998

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REPORT

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Twenty-fourth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Management and Conservation of Fisheries for the Asia-Pacific Region

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. recommended that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries be used widely as a guideline in formulating and implementing fisheries management systems (para. 28);
2. requested that workshops and seminars on the implications and subsequent implementation of the Code be organized at the sub-regional and regional levels (para. 28);
3. recommended that the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) seek to harmonize national fishery policies with a view toward attaining the sustainability of fishery resources, including transboundary and straddling and highly migratory fish stocks (para. 30);
4. recommended that the APFIC work to accelerate the transfer of technology and capacity building in the fisheries sector (para. 30);
5. recommended that the APFIC strive to translate research results into effective management options for the region (para. 30).

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

6. recommended that governments throughout the region give increased attention to fisheries management and endeavor to strengthen decision-making and management capacity; the improvement of fishery information and statistical data was viewed as a critical contribution in support of these goals (para. 27);
7. recommended that member governments actively support and participate in the work of the APFIC (para. 30);
8. urged all countries to take appropriate measures to control the clearing of mangrove forests, water pollution and siltation which have negative impacts on marine fisheries (para. 32).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

9. recommended that FAO work to enhance the capacity of member countries to conduct reliable surveys of fish stocks and to collect accurate data on harvests to facilitate sustainable management of resources (para. 27);
10. requested FAO to assume a leadership role among the large number of regional and sub-regional bodies dealing with fisheries resources in Asia and the Pacific to enhance cooperation and coordination and to avoid duplication (para. 31);

urged FAO to give due attention to the needs of land-locked and small-island countries in developing appropriate fish production strategies and optimizing fish yields (para. 33).

World Food Summit Follow-up

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

requested FAO to work closely with concerned countries to analyze the problem of post-harvest food losses and make recommendations on how such losses could be reduced (para. 40);

recommended several key areas for concerted national, regional and international actions in pursuance of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, including: (i) mobilizing resources to assist Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) in initiating and sustaining their national plans of action; (ii) enhancing the role of women in implementing the seven commitments for achieving food security; (iii) assisting transition economies with liberalization and privatization of food markets and other macro-economic measures; (iv) improving preparedness for the new world trading order, especially for the LIFDCs and small Pacific island countries; (v) strengthening national early warning systems and starting the work on Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping Systems (FIVIMS); (vi) sharing information and experiences in translating the World Food Summit Plan of Action into national plans of action among Pacific island countries; and (vii) strengthening the work on biotechnology for the benefit of small farmers (para. 43);

recommended the full use of TCDC/ECDC and other mechanisms for regional cooperation (para. 45).

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

called for countries to be resolute in sustaining resource allocations for agriculture and food security (para. 38);

urged donor countries to provide support for FIVIMS (para. 41).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

requested FAO to assist countries in preparing project documents necessary for full participation in the Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) (para. 39);

requested FAO support in strengthening preparedness to deal with the El Niño phenomenon and other natural disasters (para. 41);

urged FAO to assist in strengthening national and regional early warning systems within the framework of the Global Information and Early Warning System (para. 41);

requested FAO, in cooperation with other international organizations, to help minimize the adverse impacts of forest fires and to assist member countries in developing effective strategies, policies and technologies for preventing, combating and managing forest fires (para. 42);

called upon FAO to reinforce and extend its work in implementing the Special Programme on Food Security, supporting the preparation of agricultural strategies for LIFDCs, promoting South-South cooperation, launching FIVIMS, organizing Telefood, supporting sustainable forest management, and assisting in marketing and trade development (para. 44).

Actions Taken on the Main Recommendations of the 23rd Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific and other FAO Activities in the Region, 1996-97

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

requested FAO to focus on following food security and production aspects: fertilizer and nutrient management, water management and irrigation, integrated pest management, development of sustainable aquaculture, post-harvest technologies, food quality and safety, emergency management of pests and diseases, and development of early warning systems (para. 48);

requested that FAO give priority attention to agricultural support systems, particularly gender analysis and the roles of women, agricultural cooperatives, research and extension, and low-interest farm credit (para. 49);

requested FAO to give priority support to member countries in sustaining and enhancing the resource base, particularly in avoiding soil loss and degradation, reforesting degraded lands, developing agroforestry, managing forests sustainably, and protecting forests against damaging wildfires (para. 50);

urged FAO to provide full support to member countries in implementing the Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia-Pacific and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (para. 50);

requested FAO to focus on necessary adjustment of policies in relation to trade liberalization and the potential impacts of the new world trade order on food-importing countries (para. 51);

urged FAO to enhance its collaboration with bilateral aid agencies and other multi-lateral organizations and NGOs to improve efficiency and avoid duplication (para. 52);

urged FAO to make maximum use of TCDC/ECDC arrangements and to expedite South-South cooperation (para. 52);

recommended that the practice of reporting separately on activities in Pacific island countries should be retained in the future (para. 53);

supported FAO's ongoing efforts to decentralize resources and authorities to the Regional and Sub-regional offices and urged continued progress in strengthening the capacity and efficiency of these offices (para. 54).

Representation of the Region on the CGIAR

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

recommended that representatives of the region on the CGIAR should have a close association with the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and other regional research organizations (para. 56);

endorsed the detailed proposals developed by FAO in consultation with the CGIAR Oversight Committee related to the criteria for suitable candidates to serve as regional representatives, mechanisms for enhancing the interaction of representatives with their constituencies and with other members and donors of the CGIAR, and procedures for improving the preparedness and participation of representatives in CGIAR meetings (para. 57);

agreed that in selecting regional representatives, a balance should be struck, with one representative coming from an Asian country and one coming from a Pacific country (para. 58);

selected Mr. Samisoni Ulitu, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji, and Dr. S.B.D.G. Jayawardene, Director of the Horticulture Research and Development Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Sri Lanka, as the region's representatives in the CGIAR (para. 59).

Concluding Items

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

noted that the statement made by the Government of Japan that it was considering possibilities for hosting the twenty-fifth session of the FAO Regional Conference would be conveyed to the Director-General, who would decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with member governments of the region (para. 61).

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Organization of the Conference

1. The twenty-fourth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held in Yangon, Myanmar, from 20 to 24 April 1998. The Conference was organized in two parts, including a Senior Officers Meeting from 20 to 22 April, and a Ministerial-level Meeting from 23 to 24 April.
2. Representatives from 26 member countries participated in the Conference. Observers from 1 member nation from the European region, 1 non-member nation, 5 international non-governmental organizations, and 4 intergovernmental organizations were also in attendance. Representatives of 7 other United Nations bodies and Specialized Agencies participated. A complete list of participants at the Conference is given in Appendix B.

Inaugural Ceremonies

3. The Senior Officers Meeting was opened with presentations by Mr. Soetatwo Hadiwigeno, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO, and His Excellency Major General Nyunt Tin, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Government of the Union of Myanmar.
4. Mr. Hadiwigeno noted the significance of the Conference, as it was the first regional gathering of agricultural ministers since the World Food Summit was held in Rome, in November 1996. He highlighted the importance of the Conference deliberations related to food security, reiterating the right of access to food for every man, woman, and child in all countries.
5. His Excellency, Major General Nyunt Tin, welcomed delegates and participants to Yangon on behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar and formally opened the Senior Officers Meeting. He stressed that adequate access to food by all could only be achieved if there was solid commitment by every individual, community, and nation. He underscored the importance of arresting and reversing agricultural land degradation and water loss in the struggle to achieve food security. His Excellency urged delegates to generate new ideas for implementing national plans of action and cooperative activities among countries to alleviate hunger and achieve sustainable development.
6. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Ministerial Meeting was held on 23 April. Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, welcomed all participants of the Conference. He noted the Conference offered a timely opportunity to draw up effective frameworks for regional and sub-regional cooperation in support of sustainable development of agriculture and advanced levels of food security at national and regional levels.
7. His Excellency, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council, Union of Myanmar, presented the inaugural address. He noted that the majority of Myanmar's people live in rural areas. Therefore, the progress and advancement of the nation cannot be separated from the development of agriculture, fisheries and forestry.
8. His Excellency noted the great diversity in the levels of economic development among the countries of the region, but stressed that nearly all countries were facing serious economic difficulties at the present time. This was likely to affect the trade and investment patterns considerably, including for agriculture. Moreover, the heavy debt burden and decline in development assistance was a particular problem for many developing countries.

9. While recalling that countries had agreed that it was the primary responsibility of national governments to implement the World Food Summit Plan of Action, His Excellency stressed the importance and value of strong international cooperation to achieve the cherished goal of sustainable food security for all.

10. The full text of the inaugural address of the Secretary-1 is given in Appendix D of this report.

Election of Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteurs

11. Delegates unanimously elected His Excellency, U Ohn Myint, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Union of Myanmar, as Chairperson of the Senior Officers Meeting. The senior officers also elected all the ministers and vice/deputy-ministers present as Vice-Chairpersons of the Senior Officers Meeting, and Dr. S.B.D.G. Jayawardane, of Sri Lanka, as Rapporteur.

12. His Excellency, Major General Nyunt Tin, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Union of Myanmar, was elected unanimously as the Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting. Delegates also elected all the Ministers present as Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference, and Mr. Abdul Waheed Khan, of Bangladesh, as Rapporteur of the Conference.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

13. The Conference adopted the agenda which is given in Appendix A. Documents submitted to the Conference are listed in Appendix C.

Statement of the Director-General

14. In his statement, Dr. Jacques Diouf noted the numerous positive initiatives undertaken to implement the Plan of Action adopted by the World Food Summit in November 1996. These include the development of national strategies for agriculture and food security toward the year 2010, the launching of "Food for All" campaigns to mobilize civil society, the implementation of the Special Programme for Food Security, the strengthening of the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases, and the full establishment of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Mapping System.

15. The Director-General highlighted FAO's efforts to enhance its processing, analysis and dissemination of information, including recent acquisition and application of modern information and telecommunications technologies. Among other initiatives to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of FAO in supporting member countries, the Director-General described the new and strengthened partnerships with other organizations, renewed efforts to promote investment in agriculture, and restructuring and decentralization of FAO staff and responsibilities.

16. Addressing conditions in Asia and the Pacific, the Director-General expressed concern over the recent strains that the El Niño phenomenon and other natural calamities, and the region's economic downturn, were placing on the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. He noted that, more than ever, these sectors were being called upon to absorb displaced labor, produce more export crops for foreign exchange, increase domestic food supplies, and to generate domestic sources of investment. The Director-General defined the challenge facing agriculture, forestry and fisheries as one of how to increase output while sustaining and enhancing the productive potential of the available resources.

17. The Director-General stated that overcoming the challenges calls for the promotion of a paradigm of agricultural and rural development with a broad multi-sectoral base and linkages, and

which enhances the opportunities for individuals to develop their full potential as human beings. He emphasized that development strategies need to be oriented in ways that improve the quality of human life, while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

18. A complete text of the Director-General's statement is given in Appendix E.

Ministerial-Level Session of the Conference

19. The Ministerial-level session of the Conference was convened from 23 to 24 April. It involved the full delegations of all participating countries and organizations, including 14 Ministers.

20. Dr. S.B.D.G. Jayawardane, Rapporteur of the Senior Officers Meeting, introduced the report of the Senior Officers Meeting to the Ministerial-level session and summarized the key findings and recommendations resulting from deliberations during that part of the Conference. The Ministers and other delegates endorsed the findings and recommendations of the Senior Officers Meeting, which comprise a major portion of this Conference report.

21. In validating and reinforcing the conclusions and recommendations made by the senior officers, the Ministers and other delegates drew particular attention to the need for concerted efforts by all in implementing the World Food Summit Plan of Action. They called for greater collaboration among international organizations in supporting implementation of the Plan of Action and a greater awareness of the Plan and its implications.

22. The Ministers and other delegates highlighted the many positive ongoing initiatives in the pursuit of food security and described the challenges and constraints limiting progress. Of particular concern were the recent economic problems in several countries of the region and the numerous ill-effects of the El Niño phenomenon, including prolonged drought, unpredictable weather patterns and destructive forest fires.

23. The Ministers and other delegates cited the need for sound agricultural policies, improved production techniques, solid agricultural support mechanisms, continued protection and enhancement of the natural resource base, and broader dissemination and application of appropriate technologies. Overriding all, was the need for continuing resolve on the part of national and international leaders, government and non-government agricultural organizations, farmers and consumers in the pursuit of food security.

II. MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF FISHERIES FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

24. The Conference considered the crucial contribution of fisheries to food security and socio-economic development in the Asia-Pacific region, with special reference to the achievements of the regional fisheries bodies.¹ The fact that about 85 percent of the world's fishers live in Asia and the Pacific, contributing more than half of the world's fishery production, attests to the importance of the sector in the region.

25. Delegates noted that the global production of fish for direct human consumption had reached a "plateau" of about 71 million metric tons in recent years, with a consequent decline in average *per capita* supplies. Simultaneously, the demand for fish has increased faster than supplies, resulting in widespread increases in real prices and negative impacts on consumption by the poor.

26. The delegates noted that the projected demand for food fish in the Asia-Pacific region by 2010 may be as much as 24 million tons above current production levels. The Conference therefore agreed that urgent action is needed to promote responsible fisheries, in both inland and offshore waters, and to accelerate development of sustainable aquaculture.

¹ APRC/98/4

27. The Conference recommended that governments throughout the region give increased attention to fisheries management and endeavor to strengthen decision-making and management capacity. The improvement of fishery information and statistical data was viewed as a critical contribution in support of these goals. The Conference recommended that FAO work to enhance the capacity of member countries to conduct reliable surveys of fish stocks and to collect accurate data on harvests to facilitate sustainable management of resources.

28. Recognizing the potential of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to promote sustainable fisheries management in the region, the Conference recommended that the Code be used widely as a guideline in formulating and implementing fisheries management systems. The Conference requested that workshops and seminars on the implications and subsequent implementation of the Code be organized at the sub-regional and regional levels.

29. The delegates recalled that past conferences and meetings had called repeatedly for strengthening international cooperation and coordination in fisheries conservation and management. Such assemblies had urged coordinated action particularly on reducing fishing capacity in relation to sustainable yields of fisheries resources, minimizing by-catches, protecting the environment, and developing sustainable aquaculture for producing fish protein.

30. The Conference recognized that, in Asia and the Pacific, the FAO-based Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) offers one of the best mechanisms for such joint cooperation and coordination. The Conference therefore recommended that:

- member governments actively support and participate in the work of the APFIC;
- the APFIC seek to harmonize national fishery policies with a view toward attaining the sustainability of fishery resources, including transboundary and straddling and highly migratory fish stocks;
- the APFIC work to accelerate the transfer of technology and capacity building in the fisheries sector; and
- the APFIC strive to translate research results into effective management options for the region.

31. In view of the large number of regional and sub-regional bodies dealing with fisheries resources in Asia and the Pacific, the Conference requested FAO to assume a leadership role among these bodies to enhance cooperation and coordination and to avoid duplication.

32. The Conference noted the negative impacts of the clearing of mangrove forests, water pollution and siltation on marine fisheries. It urged all countries to take appropriate measures to control such adverse phenomena.

33. The special conditions and constraints faced by land-locked and small-island countries in developing inland fisheries and aquaculture were noted by the Conference. The Conference urged FAO to give due attention to the needs of these countries in developing appropriate fish production strategies and optimizing fish yields.

34. The Conference noted the request by some members for the establishment of an intergovernmental body to foster fisheries and aquaculture development and management in South Asia.

35. One delegation requested that, in conformance with Resolution III/20 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, when reference is made in Regional Conference documents to geographical features that are under the sovereignty of more than one country or are divided among two or more countries, and those countries are unable to agree on a common name, the name used by each of the countries concerned should be reflected in the

Conference documents. The Conference noted this request. Another delegation mentioned that the FAO Conference was not a suitable forum to discuss this matter.

III. WORLD FOOD SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP

36. The Conference gave priority consideration to follow-up to the World Food Summit and implementation of the Summit's Plan of Action.² Delegates recalled the seven commitments designed to achieve sustainable food security for all and noted that the Summit's Plan of Action called for governments to play the leading role in translating these commitments into action.

37. Within this context, delegates highlighted a wide range of activities being implemented to fulfill the commitments made at the World Food Summit. These have been included in country reports which will be submitted to the Committee on World Food Security in June 1998. It was apparent that significant progress had been made by most countries in the region, but that considerable work remained to be accomplished.

38. Delegates particularly highlighted the constraints that the recent economic crisis in some countries of the region had imposed upon efforts to increase food security. They noted that the flow of investments into sustainable agriculture and rural development may decline, that agricultural research and development and extension resources may be cut back, and that farmers in some countries may have difficulty purchasing agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizer and high-quality seeds for planting. The Conference called for countries to be resolute in sustaining resource allocations for agriculture and food security.

39. The Conference welcomed the support provided by FAO through the Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS). It noted that five countries in the region were already benefiting from the SPFS, with another eight countries expected to join the Programme within the current biennium. The Conference observed that some countries had difficulty in preparing project documents necessary for full participation in the SPFS. It therefore requested FAO to assist countries in this task.

40. Noting that many countries continued to suffer unnecessary post-harvest food losses, the Conference requested FAO to work closely with concerned countries to analyze the problem and make recommendations on how post-harvest food losses could be reduced.

41. The Conference expressed concern over the El Niño phenomenon and other natural disasters and requested FAO support in strengthening preparedness to deal with them. The present El Niño-related difficulties served to highlight the value of early warning systems. The Conference therefore urged FAO to assist in strengthening national and regional early warning systems within the framework of the Global Information and Early Warning System. The Conference noted with appreciation the launching of a regional trust-fund project on Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) with the aid of one member country. It urged other donor countries to provide similar support.

42. The Conference recognized the strong linkages between sustainable forest management and food security, especially the role that healthy forests play in protecting key watersheds. In this regard, the Conference expressed concern over the catastrophic wildfires ravaging forests in many areas of the region. Delegates were also painfully aware of the ill-effects that these fires have had on the health, transportation and economic well-being of people. The Conference requested FAO, in cooperation with other international organizations, to help minimize the adverse impacts of such

² APRC/98/3

forest fires and to assist member countries in developing effective strategies, policies and technologies for preventing, combating and managing forest fires.

43. The Conference further recommended several key areas for concerted national, regional and international actions in pursuance of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. These included:

- mobilizing resources to assist Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) in initiating and sustaining their national plans of action;
- enhancing the role of women in implementing the seven commitments for achieving food security;
- assisting transition economies with liberalization and privatization of food markets and other macro-economic measures;
- improving preparedness for the new world trading order, especially for the LIFDCs and small Pacific island countries;
- strengthening national early warning systems and starting the work on FIVIMS;
- sharing information and experiences in translating the World Food Summit Plan of Action into national plans of action among Pacific island countries; and
- strengthening the work on biotechnology for the benefit of small farmers.

44. The Conference commended FAO for its initiatives in implementing the Special Programme on Food Security, supporting the preparation of agricultural strategies for LIFDCs, promoting South-South cooperation, launching FIVIMS, organizing Telefood, supporting sustainable forest management, and assisting in marketing and trade development, among others. The Conference called upon FAO to reinforce and extend this work in close collaboration with member countries.

45. The Conference recognized the outstanding human resource capacity and experience possessed by member countries in the region and recommended the full use of such expertise through TCDC/ECDC and other mechanisms for regional cooperation.

IV. ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 23RD REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND OTHER FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION, 1996-97

46. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific (ADG/RR) reported on the major FAO activities of the past biennium and actions taken on the main recommendations of the twenty-third Conference.³ He drew special attention to FAO's follow-up to the World Food Summit and measures to decentralize resources to the Regional and Sub-regional offices.

47. The Conference expressed general satisfaction with the follow-up actions taken on the recommendations of the twenty-third Conference and with the overall support provided by FAO to the region. Delegates noted with approval the apparent increased efficiency in delivery of services despite real budget reductions.

48. Among the food security and production aspects requiring priority attention, the Conference requested FAO to focus on fertilizer and nutrient management, water management and irrigation, integrated pest management, development of sustainable aquaculture, post-harvest technologies, food quality and safety, emergency management of pests and diseases, and development of early warning systems.

³ APRC/98/2

49. The Conference recognized the importance of agricultural support systems and requested that FAO give priority attention to gender analysis and the roles of women, agricultural cooperatives, research and extension, and low-interest farm credit.

50. Highlighting the importance of sustaining and enhancing the resource base, the Conference requested FAO to give priority support to member countries in avoiding soil loss and degradation, reforesting degraded lands, developing agroforestry, managing forests sustainably, and protecting forests against damaging wildfires. The Conference specifically urged FAO to provide full support to member countries in implementing the Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia-Pacific and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

51. Related to agricultural policies, the Conference requested FAO to focus on necessary adjustment of policies in relation to trade liberalization and the potential impacts of the new world trade order on food-importing countries.

52. The Conference urged FAO to enhance its collaboration with bilateral aid agencies and other multi-lateral organizations and NGOs to improve efficiency and avoid duplication. The Conference also urged FAO to make maximum use of TCDC/ECDC arrangements and to expedite South-South cooperation.

53. The Conference noted with satisfaction the preparation of a separate section in the Secretariat Note reporting on activities in Pacific island countries, especially since the Sub-regional Office has been established. The Conference recommended that this reporting practice be retained in the future.

54. The Conference supported FAO's ongoing efforts to decentralize resources and authorities to the Regional and Sub-regional offices. It urged continued progress in strengthening the capacity and efficiency of these offices.

V. REPRESENTATION OF THE REGION ON THE CGIAR

55. The Conference considered representation of the region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).⁴ Delegates noted that Malaysia and Nepal would complete their terms representing the region in 1998 and that two new representatives would need to be selected to serve from 1999 to 2002.

56. The Conference recognized the contributions of the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) in identifying the agricultural research priorities of the region and in strengthening the interaction of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) with the CGIAR. It recommended that representatives from the region have a close association with APAARI and other regional research organizations.

57. The Conference endorsed the detailed proposals developed by FAO in consultation with the CGIAR Oversight Committee related to the criteria for suitable candidates to serve as regional representatives, mechanisms for enhancing the interaction of representatives with their constituencies and with other members and donors of the CGIAR, and procedures for improving the preparedness and participation of representatives in CGIAR meetings.

58. The Conference recognized the different priority research needs and perspectives in the region and agreed that in selecting representatives a balance should be struck, with one representative coming from an Asian country and one coming from a Pacific country. The Conference further noted

⁴ APRC/98/5

that Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand are already members of the CGIAR.

59. The Conference requested the Secretariat to convene an informal group of interested representatives from Asian and Pacific countries to screen the *curriculum vitae* of proposed candidates. Based on the recommendations of the informal group, the Conference selected Mr. Samisoni Ulitu, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji, and Dr. S.B.D.G. Jayawardena, Director of the Horticultural Crop Research and Development Institute, Sri Lanka, as the region's representatives in the CGIAR.

VI. CONCLUDING ITEMS

Date and Place of the Twenty-fifth Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

60. The Government of Japan graciously informed the Conference that it was considering possibilities for hosting the twenty-fifth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in the year 2000.

61. The Chairperson of the Conference noted that the statement of Japan would be conveyed to the Director-General of FAO, who would decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with member governments.

Adoption of the Report

62. The Conference unanimously adopted the draft report presented by the Rapporteur and the Conference Chairperson.

Closure of the Conference

63. In closing statements and comments, delegates expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Union of Myanmar for hosting the Conference. They were most appreciative of the generous and warm hospitality extended to all participants.

64. On behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar, His Excellency, Major General Nyunt Tin, thanked the participants for their constructive and positive contributions which had contributed to the Conference's success. He noted that the battle to overcome hunger and poverty was far from won, but that the Conference had made important recommendations to deal with the challenges ahead. His Excellency called on all countries of the region to work together, with support from FAO and other international organizations, to address the remaining problems. He then declared the twenty-fourth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific closed.

AGENDA**SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING**
20-22 APRIL 1998**I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

1. Opening of the Senior Officers Meeting
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

**II. SELECTED ISSUES IN AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

4. Management and Conservation of Fisheries Resources for the Asia and Pacific region with special emphasis on the Achievements of the Regional Fisheries Bodies
5. World Food Summit Follow-up
6. Actions taken on the Main Recommendations of the 23rd Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific and other FAO Activities in the Region 1996-97

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
8. Other Matters
9. Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting
10. Closure of the Senior Officers Meeting

PLENARY SESSION
23-24 APRIL 1998

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. Report on World Food Summit Follow-up and of the Senior Officers Meeting⁵

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
8. Date, place and main subject of the 25th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
9. Adoption of the Report (including the Senior Officers Meeting)
10. Closure of the Conference

⁵ Including Senior Officers Meeting items 4 and 6

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE**
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APPENDIX C
ANNEXE C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

APRC/98/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
APRC/98/2	Actions taken on the Main Recommendations of the 23rd Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific and other FAO Activities in the Region 1996-97
APRC/98/3	World Food Summit Follow-up
APRC/98/4	Management and Conservation of Fisheries Resources in the Asia and Pacific Region with special emphasis on the Achievements of the Regional Fisheries Bodies
APRC/98/5	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
APRC/98/6/REP 1	Report of the Senior Officers Meeting
APRC/98/7/DRAFT	Report of the Conference

INF SERIES

APRC/98/INF/1	Information Note
APRC/98/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
APRC/98/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
APRC/98/INF/4	Director-General's Statement

OD SERIES

APRC/98/OD/1	Order of the Day
APRC/98/OD/2	Order of the Day
APRC/98/OD/3	Order of the Day
APRC/98/OD/4	Order of the Day
APRC/98/OD/5	Order of the Day

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-1
HIS EXCELLENCY LIEUTENANT GENERAL KHIN NYUNT

It is a great privilege and honor for me to have this opportunity to address the 24th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. I feel more so as this is the very first time that our country is hosting an FAO Regional Conference. May I also say how happy we are to have the opportunity to welcome you to our country. Your visit is taking place at a most auspicious occasion since it coincides with Myanmar's celebration of the 50th Golden Anniversary of our independence. Although your stay in our country is brief, I hope that it will be able to provide you with a glimpse of the country and its people.

We have before us a full and challenging agenda. However, we are fully confident that with the cooperation from all the Delegations, the Conference will be a success and will be able to provide meaningful inputs to the food security of not only this region but also worldwide.

It may be recalled that the last Regional Conference was held in an atmosphere of hope and expectation at a time when all of us were working hard for a successful World Food Summit. I must also add that it was a successful Summit. It was successful because there is now increased public awareness of the extent of hunger and malnutrition and their causes. The Summit brought countries together in determination to work cooperatively so that the future may be a little brighter for the 1.5 billion people in the world who live under the poverty line. It also brought about a strong political commitment by the Governments to promote effective strategies and activities so that, at the latest by the year 2015, the number of under-nourished people can be reduced by half.

Presently, there are 800 million people with inadequate access to food. This is not only intolerable and unacceptable but also untenable. Pockets of prosperity cannot in the long run flourish in a sea of poverty. Inadequate food security also impinges upon security in general. That is why the heads of one hundred delegations put their imprimatur on the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

It is appropriate that at an important forum like the present Regional Conference we all take stock of the achievements in implementing the commitments we made at the Summit. It is equally important that we also examine the challenges and the constraints which we face.

In the World Food Summit (WFS) Plan of Action, we have undertaken to implement these commitments as the sovereign right and responsibility of each State. We are also fully aware that it is the primary responsibility of national governments to implement the WFS Plan of Action. At the same time, the importance of strong international economic cooperation in the effective implementation of the Plan cannot be over stressed.

The Asia and the Pacific Region is one of the fastest growing regions economically. However there is great diversity in the economic development levels of the nations constituting the region. It is also a fact that even some of the newly industrializing countries in the region, despite their strong economic fundamentals, are currently facing serious economic difficulties because of the currency turmoil. This will certainly impact on the trade and investment situation in the region. At a time that we need enhanced aid and investment in the agriculture sector, the regional realities make the prospect much less favorable.

It is worth recalling that many of the developing countries suffer under heavy external debt burden. Development aid has also declined in the recent years. It is disheartening that aid to the agriculture sector declined by nearly 38 percent between 1998 and 1995. The present situation looks no brighter. Here we cannot stress strongly enough that in the national government's endeavor to implement the WFS Plan of Action, a favorable international climate is extremely important. Without such an environment, the cherished goal of Food Security for all will be unattainable and will remain a dream.

Let me now turn to our national endeavors in promoting and implementing the commitments that Myanmar has made at the Summit.

It may be recalled that at the Summit all of us committed to ensure "an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and adequate participation of women and men, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all". In Myanmar we are doing exactly that. Indeed, peace and economic and social development are the very watchwords of our Government. This corresponds to our goal for a peaceful, prosperous, modern, and developed State.

In trying to meet these lofty and admirable objectives, each nation has to face its own unique challenges as each individual country has its own history and culture as well as specific circumstances. In the case of Myanmar, one special feature of country is that it is a Union composed of 135 different national races. Therefore, unity and national reconsolidation are essential to ensure peace and stability in the country.

Unfortunately, building peace and progress has been a most daunting task for the country. Since the time of our independence in 1948, our country has had to face the problem of armed insurrection from various groups, particularly from the national races. Therefore, after assuming responsibility, our Government has had as one of its top priorities the achievement of unity and reconsolidation with the national races. It entered into negotiations with the armed groups in good faith and with sincere goodwill. Through our tireless efforts, we were able to dispel decades of doubt and suspicion and win over the trust and confidence of the national races. Today, Myanmar is therefore enjoying unprecedented peace as guns have fallen silent in practically all corners of the nation. There is now only one group left outside the peace process but we are confident that this group will also be able to join the rest of the national brethren for progress and development of the country and the entire people.

The Government's efforts for peace were also accompanied by efforts for development of border areas which had suffered so much due to armed conflict. A new Ministry devoted entirely to look after border areas development was created and the Government, out of its own resources, has spent more than 8.83 billion kyats to improve the infrastructure by building roads and bridges, constructing irrigation dams and reservoirs, establishing schools and dispensaries, and introducing modern methods of agriculture. The programme can be said to be an integrated rural development programme aimed at alleviating and eradicating poverty. For the first time, the people of these areas - which indeed have been the most backward regions of the country - now have a chance to uplift their economic and social standards of living and enjoy a decent quality of life.

At the same time, these remote border regions are also areas where poppy has traditionally been grown. Myanmar inherited the problem of drugs as a legacy of its colonial past. After independence, the issue became further compounded when drug production and trafficking became linked to the internal insurgency problem. However, the Myanmar government is fully committed to combat the scourge of narcotic drugs and drug related-activities. This has been undertaken as a national responsibility and represents one of the highest priorities for our Government.

The question of narcotics drugs carries with it political, economic and social dimensions. We therefore have adopted a multi-faceted approach in trying to resolve the issue. The legal regime in the fight against narcotics has been strengthened to provide more effective enforcement measures including those against money laundering.

As a result of the Government's endeavors for suppression of narcotics, it was able to seize and destroy more than 3,700 kilograms of heroin, over 22,700 kilograms of opium, over 10 million tablets of stimulant drugs especially amphetamines, and burned down 70 heroin refining camps during the period September 1988 to the end of December 1997. But this was achieved at a great cost: 766 members of the Armed Forces including 20 officers sacrificed their lives, and 2292 members including 81 officers were wounded, many of whom lost limbs or eyesight. Nowhere in the world has a nation sacrificed so much in the fight against this threat to the youth of the world.

Much has been accomplished in Myanmar's anti-narcotics endeavors. Last year, due to the success of the Government in educating and persuading the national races, we were able to declare an area right in the heart of the poppy growing region as an opium-free zone. We look forward to establishing more such zones in the future as well. All these efforts for the suppression of narcotics as well as development plans to provide alternate means of livelihood are being carried out with our own resources. We are completely confident that we shall be able to achieve our goal of total elimination of poppy growing and opium production. However, if the international community should assist us, we shall surely be able to reach this goal sooner rather than later. I would at the same time like to emphasize that we shall be sparing no efforts in carrying out our national responsibility as well as in fulfilling our international duty.

At the same time, to ensure enduring peace, unity and development in the nation, we are in the midst of drafting a new constitution which will reflect the aspirations and guarantee the interests and welfare of all the national races residing in the nation. The State that will emerge with the new institution will be a multi-party democratic society with a market-oriented economy based on principles of justice, liberty and equality and will ensure the national identity and cultural traditions of all the peoples.

Economically, the government has adopted a market-oriented economic system to replace the centrally planned economy of yesteryears. The government has invited foreign investment and encouraged the private sector to play an enhanced role in the economic life of the country. Because of these policy measures there was a marked improvement in economic growth during 1992/1993 to 1995/1996 when a Short Term Four-Year Plan was implemented. There was an annual average GDP growth rate of 7.5 percent. The government is presently consolidating this success by implementing a Five-Year Economic Development Plan. The private sector now occupies a primary position in the economy, contributing 76 percent towards the GDP and 55 percent towards exports.

For the development of a nation, the social fabric needs to be strengthened. Towards this end, the government has been taking multi-faceted measures to uplift the morale and morality of the people and to preserve our unique cultural heritage and national identity. The overwhelming majority of our people are Buddhists guided by the noble principles of loving kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy. Even in the short time you are here, I am confident that you will be able to notice that our people are gentle, kind-hearted and very hospitable. Moreover, you will be able to witness that the people are going about their daily life without fear or anxiety; that the people enjoy rule of law and basic freedoms. On our part, we are very glad that you will be able to see at first hand the true conditions in the country, and thus disprove the wrong impressions that are being spread by certain quarters.

Myanmar is an agricultural country. The majority of our people live in the countryside and are involved in agricultural activities. Therefore, the progress and advancement of the nation cannot be separated from development of agriculture. It therefore gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to appraise you of the agriculture situation in my country and our efforts at ensuring food security.

Myanmar is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia, comprising a land area of over 676,000 square kilometers. With a population of approximately 48 million, it can be said that Myanmar has a favorable population-to-land ratio.

Being an agricultural country, the backbone of Myanmar's economy is the agricultural sector and it contributes 36 percent to GDP; accounts for 35 percent of export earning and employs 64 percent of the labor force. Hence one of the economic objectives laid down by the government is the "development of agriculture as a base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well". It would not be an exaggeration to say that the experience of the recent past has shown that the overall economic growth of the country is closely linked to the performance of the agriculture sector. Since 1992/1993 when we started implementing the Four-Year Economic Development Plan, an integrated strategy has been applied for agricultural development.

Through this strategy, we strive to achieve surplus in paddy production; self-sufficiency in edible oil; and to enhance the production and export of pulses and industrial crops. To achieve these objectives we have been implementing a number of measures to develop new agricultural land; to provide sufficient irrigation water; and to enhance the effort at agricultural mechanization. This strategy also calls for introducing modern agro-technology and the development and utilization of modern and high yielding varieties of agricultural crops.

Presently, our country has 18 million hectares of cultivable land of which only 9 million hectares are under cultivation. We still have 9 million hectares available for cultivation. Therefore the government is actively promoting the development of new agricultural land. To this end, encouragement has been given to reclaim fallow land and cultivable waste land. In deep water areas, development of farm embankment and paddy-fish integrated farming has also been encouraged. In the hilly area, terrace farming has been introduced, which also has the added benefit of protecting soil erosion.

We are also engaged in land consolidation of the existing agricultural land through proper drainage, irrigation and by constructing access roads in these areas to enable utilization of mechanized farming. In the fiscal year 1996/1997, we were able to develop over 150,000 hectares of fallow and waste land and put them to productive use.

One significant comparative advantage of Myanmar's agriculture is that we are also rich in water resources. It is calculated that Myanmar has total water resources of approximately 870 million acre-feet per annum. Of this we are only utilizing 6 percent of the water resources.

Since the assumption of State responsibilities in 1988, the Government has been making sustained efforts to expand irrigation capacity of the country. Altogether, 86 irrigation projects have been implemented at a cost of approximately 14 billion kyats using our own financial and manpower resources. As a result, irrigated area increased from 12.5 percent of the sown area in 1987/1988 to 16.4 percent in 1996/1997. It is our hope that with our agriculture and water resources, combined with infusion of capital and technology from abroad, we can significantly increase our production and contribute towards food security, not only nationally, but also regionally and internationally.

Now let me turn to another area, which is of interest to this Conference: management and conservation of fishery resources. Myanmar, with a coastline of 2,800 kilometers, is also rich in marine resources. It has been estimated that one million metric tons of fishery resources could be exploited annually on a sustainable basis. Presently we are exploiting only 60 percent of the maximum sustainable yield. At the same time, Myanmar has laid down the policy of sustainable exploitation of marine resources. Towards this end, the government has promulgated four laws to enable the sustainable management and conservation of marine resources. Moreover, we have recently started commercial aquaculture in Myanmar. Although they are in the coastal areas where there is an abundance of mangrove forests, preventative measures have been taken to prevent environmental degradation.

All in all, fisheries together with the livestock sector is the third most important sector of the economy and contributes 7.1 percent of GDP. However, there still remains room for expansion in this sector on a sustainable basis and the government is taking measures so that the production from this sector would increase significantly in the future.

Forestry is another area where Myanmar's emphasis and FAO's competency converge. Nearly 51 percent of Myanmar is covered by forest. Our forestry resources constitute not only a valuable economic resource but also the foundation for ecological balance of the country's other resources. In order to protect the forest and conserve wildlife and wild plants, five new laws or regulations were enacted since 1992. Here we are proud to mention that because of our sustainable forest management practices, we remain the world's largest exporter of teak, and a significant exporter of hard woods.

We in Myanmar practice a system of sustainable forest management by establishing a quantitative ceiling through the imposition of an annual allowable cut. This in effect means that despite higher world demand we will not cut annually more than 432,000 cubic meters of teak and 2,340,000 cubic meters of non-teak hard woods. We also maintain over 15 percent of total land area as Reserve and Protected Public Forests. We are also carrying out a sustained programme of reforestation. As of 1997, there were over 610,000 hectares of forest plantations.

Recently the government has been implementing a special Greening Project in the nine districts of the central dry zone. This project has been implemented with multiple objectives. The greening of the dry zone would not only conserve the environment, including soil and water resources, but would also contribute towards meeting the basic needs of the rural people for forest products. It would also enhance the sustainable development of socio-economic conditions of the rural community. More importantly, it would support the agricultural sector through improved and balanced conditions of climate and the environment.

These are some of the national endeavors that we are undertaking. We are hopeful that through these measures we can bring about peace, stability and development to Myanmar. Under this conducive environment we hope to bring about enhanced agricultural development and greater food production nationally. With our vast areas of cultivable land, rich water resources and a benign climate we hope to further develop agriculture and agro-industries in our country and thus contribute towards food security for all.

In all of these endeavors, Myanmar as well as many countries in the region need a favorable economic environment. For the developing countries, it would mean a respite from the external debt burden and the debt overhang. It would mean remunerative prices for agricultural products. It would mean greater investment and aid to the agricultural sector. It would mean enhanced assistance from organizations like FAO on fishery, forestry and agriculture. It would mean greater cooperation

between the countries of the region and the agencies and organizations in the United Nations system in general and FAO in particular.

Recently, FAO has launched a number of priority activities which have direct bearing on the World Food Summit objectives. In these, as well as other areas, Myanmar stands ready to cooperate with FAO and other like-minded countries so that we can achieve the cherished goal of sustainable food security for all.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Five months ago, the FAO Conference met in Rome where it reviewed the state of food and agriculture in the world and the past and future activities of the Organization.

Although according to the latest estimates the overall world economy grew by a satisfactory rate of approximately 4 percent in 1997, the food and agriculture situation was one of contrasts. Agricultural production only increased by an estimated 1.1 percent and cereal stocks are still below the security threshold. Furthermore, development aid has hovered in recent years at a nominal US \$60 billion and has therefore fallen in real terms, while the portion of this aid earmarked for agriculture slumped from US \$16 billion in 1988 to some US \$10 billion in 1996.

FAO's activities in the previous biennium were marked by the World Food Summit held in November 1996 since then, several initiatives have been undertaken to implement the resulting Plan of Action:

- 150 national strategies for agriculture and food security towards the year 2010 have been drafted with the governments of developing Member Nations and others in transition;
- the Special Programme for Food Security is now operational in 30 countries, including 4 in the Asia and Pacific region, and under formulation in 40 others, including 10 in the region;
- the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases has registered a number of successes, in particular against rinderpest and desert locust; and
- the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System has been fully established.

During the last biennium, the Organization continued to help implement the Marrakech agreements by organizing regional workshops and executing national projects. The Organization will also step up its action to assist in the preparation of future trade negotiations, working closely with the WTO, the World Bank and UNCTAD.

In accordance with the directives adopted by the Summit, FAO has also encouraged the launching of "Food for All" campaigns to mobilize civil society. A number of countries have already initiated a process of national consultation to this effect. The "TeleFood 1997" operation that was broadcast by some one hundred television channels in over 70 countries gave 500 million viewers an added insight into the problems of hunger and malnutrition and laid the foundations of a system for the raising of funds which - already this year - will finance small projects of direct assistance to rural communities in developing countries, helping them boost agricultural production. As endorsed by the last Conference of FAO, TeleFood is to be an annual event to be held within the celebration of World Food Day. The next edition will be held from 16 to 18 October 1998 and will be larger in scale than last year.

Finally, interagency co-operation for implementing the Summit Plan of Action has been put in place with the establishment of a Network on Rural Development and Food Security led by FAO and IFAD. The mechanism for monitoring the Summit Plan of Action has also been set up and the

Committee on World Food Security will evaluate progress at its next session, as you will yourselves for the Asia and Pacific region.

Among the other FAO initiatives with world-wide impact undertaken during the 1996/97 biennium, I should like to mention:

- with regard to the sustainable use of natural resources, the adoption of the World Plan of Action of the International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources and the revision of the International Plant Protection Convention;
- as regards forests, programmes focusing on the contribution of forestry to food security, on effective and responsible forest management and on maintaining a balance among the economic, ecological and social benefits of forests; assistance in formulating national forestry programmes; support to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and to the Eleventh World Forestry Congress hosted by Turkey;
- regarding fisheries and aquaculture, the reinforcement of the regional bodies and the staging of 21 technical consultations on the management of marine fishery resources of different regions, within the framework of the Kyoto Plan of Action on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The annual report *State of Food and Agriculture* continues to be the main source of general information in this area and now includes a section on developments in food security as a follow-up to the Summit. This document is complemented by *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* and *State of the World's Forests*. The *Sixth World Food Survey* was published in 1996. As for the long-term world outlook for agriculture and food security, a study will be carried out on the likely scenario until 2015, with a more general evaluation taking us to 2030.

With respect to the dissemination of information, the introduction of new technologies has rationalized and modernized systems, while reducing costs. The World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) now offers ready access to essential information for food security and sustainable rural development: FAOSTAT for statistical data, FAOINFO for textual information and FAOSIS for specialized information systems, in particular on animal genetic resources, pesticides and the Global Information and Early Warning System.

FAO's site on the Internet is posting over 1 million hits each month and is providing information to English-, Arabic-, Spanish- and French-speaking users. At the same time, 2000 CD-ROMs have been distributed to Member Nations to provide access to WAICENT in areas where the Internet is not yet readily available. These services will be further expanded in 1998-99 to enable Member Nations to take full advantage of the Organization's wealth of documentary information.

Actions for the advancement of women are given priority status in the general drive to involve the whole of society in the common pursuit of "Food for All". FAO's technical departments have been requested to bear gender parity in mind when formulating programmes and projects. The Special Programme for Food Security should improve the access of rural women to technologies, inputs and credit, which is why special emphasis has been placed on poultry raising and market gardening.

The Organization has strengthened coordination and co-operation with its partners to ensure that all its programmes can be implemented against a backdrop of budgetary constraint: with the World Bank and the regional banks through new agreements, mainly for the implementation of the Special Programme for Food Security; with the food and agriculture institutions based in Rome,

has a unanimously endorsed programme which, in contrast to the two previous biennia, will not need adjustment. I think I can safely say that the Organization has successfully completed its period of reform and that it can now look to the future with confidence and buckle down to its appointed mission of helping to achieve sustainable food security for all.

Allow me now to address the situation of food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and to briefly discuss recent events of great concern to most countries in the region.

During the last two decades the Asia and Pacific region has led the world in economic growth. Most countries saw rapid and sustained growth for a considerable period. While agriculture GDP changed gradually from 30 percent in the mid-1980s to about 20 percent in recent past, the sector remains a driving economic force. More than 65 percent of the region's inhabitants live in rural areas; and agriculture employs more than half of the economically active population.

Unfortunately, the "El Niño" phenomenon has once again seriously affected a number of countries and underscored the existence of pockets of vulnerability to food insecurity in the region. Floods, and other natural hazards such as earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption, and forest fires have also plagued large areas. They have been a major cause of food insecurity among the vulnerable segment of the population, with large and devastating impact in terms of price upswings and instability of food access, coupled with damaged production and market infrastructures.

In a similar manner, the contagion of monetary and financial instability puts in jeopardy the region's progress towards sustainable food security and poverty alleviation. This instability poses a number of challenges to agriculture, fisheries and forestry. More than ever, the sector is called upon to absorb displaced labour, produce more export crops for foreign exchange, increase domestic food supply to mitigate upward pressures in wages, prices, and inflation rate, and to generate domestic sources of investment. In this context, the Organization, in consultation with the World Bank, is preparing programmes to develop peri-urban agriculture in those countries which are most affected by the current crisis as it is felt that these programmes could greatly contribute to lessen the problem of unemployment and urban poverty which have been exacerbated by the financial situation and adjustment programmes.

Under the new economic paradigm, a declining public sector role together with high costs, will diminish the influence of domestic procurement *vis-à-vis* international stocks in stabilizing domestic food prices and supply. On top of this, world food prices vary widely. The inherent risks and uncertainties associated with trade-oriented supply stabilization are a serious food security issue.

Household food insecurity as a result of poverty continues to be a major challenge in the region where the bulk (74 percent) of the poor in the developing world is located. Poverty is mainly a rural phenomenon; it accounts for about three-fourths of the total. As the large majority of the rural poor depend on agriculture for employment and income, agricultural growth offers a potentially enormous source of poverty reduction, particularly when the growth is broadly based.

Given rising population, shrinking agricultural land, increasing demands on limited water resources from the expanding urban and industrial sectors, intensified cropping, and widespread land degradation, sustainable agricultural resource management is crucial for food security. The challenge is one of how to increase output from the sector while sustaining and enhancing the productive potential of the available resources.

Against this backdrop, I wish to briefly address the issue of management and conservation of fisheries resources in the Asia and Pacific region which was considered by the Senior Officers meeting. As you know, fisheries plays a vital role in feeding the world's population, contributing

IFAD and WFP; with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, its Technical Advisory Committee and its institutes; with the other UN agencies under the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination; and with the private sector and the community of non-governmental organizations.

Similarly, co-operation has been stepped up with many Member Nations. Over the past three years, some 1300 experts have been implementing FAO programmes under agreements for co-operation between developing countries and countries in transition and co-operation with academic and research institutions, and by hiring retired experts. In support of the Special Programme for Food Security, a number of South-South co-operation agreements have enabled more advanced developing countries, with FAO assistance, to provide a critical mass of field technicians in the rural communities of other developing countries. Five countries from the Asia and the Pacific region have agreed to provide such assistance and it is hoped that others will join soon. Finally, with a view to building national capacities, FAO is looking into training opportunities offered by Member Nations in the areas of its mandate for students and trainees from developing countries and will itself employ young professionals, within the limit of available resources, so that they can add practical experience to their academic training.

One of FAO's ongoing concerns is to promote investment in agriculture. During the last three years, 24 projects prepared with the assistance of the Investment Centre in the Asia and the Pacific region were approved for financing for a total value of US \$3,564 million, including US \$2,245 million of external loans.

FAO's Technical Co-operation Programme continues to act as a strong catalyst on account of its defining characteristics of rapid approval, limited project duration, low costs and practical orientation. A total of 86 new projects were implemented in the Asia and Pacific region in 1996-97.

The restructuring of FAO has proceeded under conditions of severe budgetary limitations, with a focus on identifying savings and improving efficiency through decentralization.

Besides reducing the number of staff members - posts fell from 4185 in January 1994 to 3599 in January 1998 - annual savings of US \$25 million have been made by cuts in travel, translations, publications and meetings. Growing attention is now being given to training staff, raising the contingent of women professionals and ensuring equitable representation of Member Nations: the number of countries not represented among the staff dropped from 54 in January 1994 to 29 in February 1998, taking into account ongoing recruitment.

The decentralization process is nearing completion: all the new liaison and sub-regional offices are open and the Regional Office in Bangkok has been substantially strengthened; Member Nation coverage by the network of FAO representatives has been extended through multiple accreditation and the use of National Programme Officers and National Correspondents. At present, 39 percent of the staff are assigned to decentralized offices. The decentralization of policy assistance and project operations will bring FAO more closely in touch with the needs of its Member Nations.

The restructuring process has been accompanied by a delegation of operational, administrative and financial responsibilities to departments at Headquarters and teams in the field, with the establishment of the Management Support Units and tighter audit control in all regional, sub-regional and country offices.

I should like to conclude this overview of the highlights of the last two years by recalling that the Conference approved a Programme of Work and Budget for 1998/99 with zero nominal growth which, in real terms, amounts to a reduction of 3.7 percent. Despite this, however, the Organization

significantly to the dietary protein intake of hundreds of millions of people. Aquaculture has not only a long history in this region, but it also currently contributes about 87.7 percent of world aquaculture production of fish and shellfish. However, the multiple benefits and changing roles of fisheries in the development process have been frequently neglected in the past. Instead, crop and livestock issues have dominated research, investment and policy agenda related to food production. Today, fishery resources are moving to the forefront of national and global policy debates about how to restructure economic, institutional and political systems for sustainable development.

Management is an essential tool for the sound and sustainable development of fisheries. Governments should, therefore, give priority attention to fisheries management and endeavour to strengthen their management capacity through the improvement of fishery information and statistical data for appraisals of resources and for management decisions. Aquaculture has a great potential for further augmenting production in this region. In particular, rural aquaculture can play a valuable role, in ensuring food security in rural areas.

In so doing, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries should be used widely as a guideline in the formulation and implementation of fisheries management systems. Regional Workshops/Seminars on the implications of the Code should be organized at the sub-regional and regional level.

In the same vein, I would also mention the need to give priority attention to the management of other natural resources. A recent FAO report on land degradation in South Asia noted that "...total evidence is sufficient to call for immediate action to prevent further land degradation and, where possible, to reverse the effects of past degradation." This statement is widely held to hold true for East and Southeast Asia. Another report noted evidence of environmental stress in the Pacific countries although the specific nature and urgency of the problem varies. Major aspects of land degradation and food insecurity can be attributed to poor forest management and deforestation. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study, carried out over the past two years under the auspices of the Regional Forestry Commission, dramatically highlighted the challenges facing the sector in the coming decade and in particular that the forests of the region were under severe threat, with a faster clearance rate than anywhere else in the world.

Some Asian forests are also experiencing considerable damage from fire, with serious impact both locally and regionally. The extent and effect of forest fires are clearly related to climatic and environmental conditions, but also and very importantly to policies, laws and institutional arrangements which directly affect forest ecosystems and land clearing practices. Any attempts to reduce the incidence and effect of forest fires will therefore require a comprehensive review of all relevant policies, strategies, legal and institutional measures. FAO has worked closely with a number of Asian countries to develop National Fire Protection Policies and will continue to provide information and technical assistance to its members on forest fire prevention and control. In response to growing concerns on this matter, a Forest Fire Consultation Meeting was convened during the 11th World Forestry Congress in October 1997, followed by an Information Meeting during the 29th FAO Conference in November. Participants noted the effects of land use policies on fires and called for FAO to convene an international consultation on forest fires, emphasising policy issues and resource mobilization.

The Consultation planned for later this year, will bring together key experts in land use policies from sister UN Organizations, governments, the private sector, NGO's and international agencies and will act as a forum for open dialogue on policy initiatives that can be taken to reduce fire risk and outbreaks. FAO will also intensify efforts to use the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture for forest fire prediction. For example, it can be used to

provide early warning about adverse weather patterns such as El Niño that have direct impact on prevailing environmental conditions which exacerbate fires.

Finally, I should like to stress that FAO is committed to collaborate closely with UNEP, UNDP and other international organizations to mobilize coordinated international responses to assist countries in responding to catastrophic wildfires. Strong inter-agency partnership will be required to address the extent and complexity of the growing forest fire problem. Meanwhile, it is encouraging to note that countries in the region are increasingly giving sustainable forest management its due priority.

Water is also vital for agriculture and, like land, is a finite resource. *Per caput* water availability in the region, which fell by half in the 30 years ending 1980, may fall by another 35 percent by the year 2000. With much of the region's crop production dependent on irrigation, this decline in water availability has potentially severe implications for food security. The situation is exacerbated by the growing competition for water from the urban and industrial sectors.

Technology has proved instrumental in accelerating agricultural production and national economic development in the region. Yield increase is projected to remain as the primary source of growth in the future. Yet, national and international support to agricultural research and development and the diffusion and transfer of technology have been on the decline.

Overcoming the above challenges calls for the promotion of a paradigm of agricultural and rural development with a broad multi-sectoral base and linkages, and which enhances the opportunities for individuals to develop their full potential as human beings. Development strategies need to be oriented in a manner that will improve the quality of human life, while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

For my part, despite the current difficulties, I remain convinced that the economic fundamentals for long-term growth and prospects for the region are sound. Its leaders have underlined their resolve to achieve sustainable growth, to preserve the dynamism and resilience of the region, and to unlock the full potential of the people who live here. Without doubt, the Asia and Pacific region will continue to play a leading role in the global economy in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

