

Statement delivered by His Excellency Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations on behalf of LDCs in the Second Committee on Agriculture development, food security and nutrition UNHQs, New York, 16 October 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I deliver this statement on behalf of the 47 least developed countries. We align ourselves with the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of G77.

We thank the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on Agriculture development, food security and nutrition.

We express our deep concern that the world is facing one of the largest food crises in 70 years, with 20 million people in four countries are at risk of famine. Globally, 108 million people in 2016 were reported to be facing food insecurity crisis or worse, fuelled by conflict, record-high food prices and abnormal weather patterns including those caused by El Niño. Out of 23 countries that are facing high severity and magnitude of acute food insecurity, 18 are LDCs with a combined population of around 72 million. We call upon the international community, especially our development partners, to enhance their financial and in-kind support to address this emergency.

In the implementation efforts of the SDGs, Goal 2 warrants our special attention as the success of many other goals are directly contingent upon it. Agriculture is the dominant sector in most LDCs that are depending on agriculture for food and nutrition security. The majority of the population, 68.6 per cent, in LDCs live in rural areas. It is also the primary source of employment for a vast majority of the rural population in the LDCs. It has direct linkages to the eradication of poverty and hunger, rural development and gender equality and empowerment of women.

We are concerned that in LDCs, agricultural productivity remained constant from 2010 to 2014. The contribution of agriculture to GDP in 2011 and 2015 was about the same at 26.4 and 26.6 per cent, respectively. About irrigation, in LDCs, only 8.3 per cent of total agricultural land is being irrigated.

In recent decades, LDCs have been disproportionately affected by climate change impacts and disasters. Severe droughts threatened millions across southern and eastern Africa and Central America. Tropical storms caused widespread suffering, while heavy rains and floods hit eastern and southern Asia. The LDCs were severely affected by these events. Food security and the threat of famine threatened several of these countries. We are also concerned that climate-induced migration is on the rise in the LDCs in the Pacific region. All these have badly affected the crop production, livestock and agricultural livelihoods in many LDCs. The reduction of productive land caused by desertification, land degradation is further undermining their efforts in sustaining food production to meet the growing demand for food and nutrition. Some LDCs are now in a state of famine. Moreover, the vast majority of farmers in LDCs are smallholders, and many of them are women who have a high degree of exposure and vulnerability to environmental and price shocks.

Regarding nutrition in LDCs, we note that the prevalence of undernourishment has slightly declined from 24.9 per cent to 22.3 per cent in 2010 and 2015, respectively. However, stunting levels in LDCs are still quite high. Studies show that about 40 per cent of the children below five are stunted. Nutrition must be given higher priority in national development if the SDGs are to be achieved.

Mr. Chair,

Increasing the growth of agricultural output and productivity is central to boosting incomes in LDCs. They must be enabled to participate in regional and global value chains through commodity diversification and value addition. However, this can be done only by upgrading and increasing the domestic value added and technology content of their products. These are vitally important for the LDCs to gain the maximum benefit from their agricultural products.

Without significant public investment it would not be possible for the rural public goods to strengthen markets and promote the adoption of new technologies. We, therefore, underline the need for adequate investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in the LDCs. Support is needed to develop climate-resistant higher-yield varieties of staple foods in LDCs.

Empowerment of women, especially rural women, in LDCs is critical to the success of eradicating poverty and malnutrition as women are the backbone of rural communities, responsible for food security and nutrition in many households.

A revitalised international partnership is vital for the realization of the SDG 2 and the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action of eradicating poverty and its ambitious target of enabling half of LDCs to reach the stage of graduation by 2020. LDCs need robust support for capacity building and financing to adopt climate-smart practices and technologies.

We also emphasize that eradicating poverty and hunger, access to public health, education and other social services, addressing the impacts of climate change and building productive capacity and infrastructure in LDCs should remain at the centre of the United Nations development cooperation efforts. We need to remind ourselves that investing in food security and agricultural development will also strengthen efforts to prevent conflict and achieve peace.

Thank you.