



**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and President of the ECOSOC
On World Pulses Day**

New York, February 10, 2021

I am pleased to join you today in recognition of the important contribution of pulses to sustainable food systems and healthy diets.

Pulses are not only an integral part of a healthy diet. They contribute to improving food security and ensuring soil health. They also improve and ensure sustainability of agricultural production systems.

Pulses are important crops in many Asian and African countries. They are part of Asian diets and have been for centuries. When the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan was imprisoned by his son, he was offered the choice of only one food during his incarceration. He chose lentils. It can be prepared in at least 500 different ways.

Being part of Asia

my own country Pakistan is not an exception where pulses are one of the most important sources of plant protein.

Sustainable production and consumption of Pulses are thus part of our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has highlighted how many of our food systems are failing us, especially where inequality is most pronounced. Food systems must become more inclusive, more equitable, and more sustainable. I believe that pulses are an integral part of such a strategy.

We cannot accept that hunger and food insecurity have been on the rise, and that malnutrition continues to affect millions of children.

With the economic slowdowns and disruptions caused by the recession triggered by the pandemic, the situation is likely to get worse.



The income decline of the poor people had impacted food security and put food access at great risk for many.

The most impacted are the poor and vulnerable as they spend an average 70% of their total income on food.

The World Food Programme estimates that 149 million people were acutely food insecure across 79 countries in 2019. COVID-19 is projected to bring the total number of acutely food insecure people to 272 million by the end of 2020.

Excellencies and dear friends, we need a humanitarian and emergency response to hunger and to disease. But we need, at the same time, to work to strengthen our food systems, and to make them more sustainable and resilient.

We need to invest in sustainable agriculture-related infrastructure to ensure market access for remote and small-scale farmers in the developing countries.

We must work together to make sustainable agriculture technologies available to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms.

There is also an urgent need to find a permanent solution to the billions of dollars of agricultural subsidies that are provided by industrial countries, which have led to chronic overproduction of certain crops, dumping of surpluses, and distortions in global markets especially in the developing countries.

Dear friends, food systems were identified in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report as a particularly important area for change, because they have ripple effects across the SDGs. They are critical for human health and well-being.

The Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit in September 2021 will call for transformative actions in the way the world produces and consumes food to accelerate progress against hunger and the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. I am sure that pulses will be an integral part of this strategy.

This will be an important contribution to the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.



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Ahead of the Summit, in next July, the 2021 High-Level Political Forum will consider SDG2 (zero hunger) and its interrelations with other SDGs. This will be part of the reflection on policies to respond to COVID-19 while putting us back on track to realize the SDGs.

I am sure that the importance of pulses will feature centrally in these discussions.

Ends