

5 December 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening Ceremony of the Global South-South Development
Expo 2011**

Good morning ...

His Excellency Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations in New York and President of the UN General Assembly High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation,

Mr. Marcello Suarez Salvia, Representing the Chair of the Group of 77 and China,

Mr. Manoj Juneja, Deputy Director-General of FAO,

Mr. Getachew Engida, Deputy Director-General, UNESCO,

Mr. Laurent Thomas, Assistant DG of FAO,

Mr. Yiping Zhou, Director of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP,

Mr. Brian J. Atwood, Chair of OECD/DAC

And Ms. ANGGUN, FAO Goodwill Ambassador,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the General Assembly, I am pleased to join you today at this 2011 Global South-South Development Expo.

I commend the F.A.O, the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP, and all the UN entities here today for their hard work and commitment to finding solutions to food insecurity.

As some of you may know, I have a personal attachment to this event. I had the honor of serving as the President of the UN General Assembly High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation, until the successful convening of the High-Level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation in Nairobi in 2009, and the adoption of its outcome. I would recall that this conference's outcome included the issue of food security.

This experience strengthened my conviction that South-South and triangular cooperation, backed by adequate funding, are key tools for tackling the development challenges of our time.

I would also take this opportunity to emphasize that South-South cooperation complements -- and does not replace-- North-South cooperation.

All such partnerships are particularly pertinent given the current and recent challenges facing our global economy and sustainable development.

Among such challenges, guaranteeing food security for all is paramount. Therefore, I consider it very appropriate that this year's South-South Expo is focusing on food security.

Around the world, almost nine hundred and twenty five million people go to bed hungry each night.

Most of them are in the South.

Our resolve this week to look critically at strategies for battling food insecurity demonstrates our solidarity with these vulnerable populations.

The world community has been able to reduce considerably the overall figures, but there is still much to be done, now and in the years to come.

UN outcomes on sustainable development, including on climate change, biodiversity and desertification, emphasize that we should be more vigilant.

This is why we must expand the search for innovative and sustainable solutions to food insecurity.

This EXPO offers an opportunity to examine holistic approaches to that end. It will enable us to exchange lessons learned and show-case successful Southern strategies and technologies for, among other things:

One, improving agricultural productivity;

Two, increasing social protection and building the resilience of the most vulnerable;

Three, managing fragile ecosystems;

Four, improving nutrition;

And five, combating diseases.

In sum, these approaches should contribute towards the achievement of the MDGs.

We will also look at renewable energy sources and agri-business models that are working to put sufficient nutritious food on the table.

Many Southern countries have lifted millions of people out of conditions of extreme poverty and hunger.

These countries have at their disposal much knowledge and technical know-how. These can be put to further good use through enhanced South-South exchanges of information, experience and technology,

with a view to raising agricultural productivity and to improving food distribution to the benefit of more populations.

For example, the “Global Dry Land Alliance-Partnering for Food Security” aims to strengthen cooperation among dry land nations. It has developed innovative solutions and best practices that can be shared broadly with dry land countries worldwide.

Another example is the African Union’s “Great Green Wall Initiative”. This project aims for the planting of a wall of trees across Africa, from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east, in an effort to tackle both environmental and poverty-related challenges. Challenges that include, the effects of land degradation, increasing aridity and desertification.

Such initiatives are designed to support and complement efforts towards tangible progress in achieving the MDGs, particularly MDG 1: to “Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger” and MDG 7: to “Ensure Environmental Sustainability”.

Through South-South solidarity, we can also learn from countries that are reforming customary norms and practices, in order to ensure that women are no longer denied equal access to land and other productive assets that contribute to food security. In doing so, women will be empowered and can gain their rightful place in society.

Investment in agricultural research is another important area for South-South cooperation. It can help improve funding for research on tropical crops, on which millions of poor people in the South depend.

Partnerships that engage leading agricultural institutions in the Global South would go a long way to strengthen the capacity of all Southern countries to feed their citizens; raise production capacities; and gainfully participate in food supply chains created to meet rising food demands in rapidly growing populations.

I applaud those Southern countries -- from Asia to Africa to Latin America – who are already actively involved in these types of exchanges.

In this context, I am thankful to those North countries who support triangular cooperation.

It is my hope that these exchanges, programs and partnerships will be replicated and adapted widely.

As President of the United Nations General Assembly, I am committed to promoting South-South and triangular cooperation, as an important part of building a united global partnership.

Only such a partnership, based on open dialogue and mutual understanding, can enable efficient collective action in a globalized, inter-dependent world.

I commend the participants and the organizers of the 2011 Global South-South Development Expo for being at the fore-front of the movement towards the consolidation of that united global partnership for achieving food security for all.

I wish you all success in your work.

You can count on my full support.

Thank you.