



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2 April 2020

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to enclose herewith, summary of the interactive dialogue titled “Targeting Hunger: South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Transforming Agriculture”, held on 12 February 2020, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

I thank you for your contribution towards making the dialogue a success. I am confident that the momentum generated by the event will galvanize greater international cooperation to eradicate global hunger and poverty.

I avail of this opportunity to express my solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend my sincere condolences for their loss.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



**Interactive Dialogue on
“Targeting Hunger: South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Transforming Agriculture”
12 February 2020,
Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Key messages and summary

H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the General Assembly convened an interactive dialogue on “Targeting Hunger: South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Transforming Agriculture”, on 12 February 2020. As achieving zero hunger remains one of the priorities of the 74th session, the event provided a platform to share experiences, identify challenges and explore opportunities for leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation to achieve this goal. The meeting included an opening session, two panels followed by interactive discussions and a closing session. The event’s programme can be found [here](#).

The opening session was chaired by the President of the General Assembly and included interventions from the Director General of FAO, Mr. Qu Dongyu, and the Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, Mr. Jorge Chediek.

Moderated by Ms. Christine Negra, Special Adviser to the UN Foundation, the first panel on “*Evidence-based policy making for sustainable agriculture and food systems to combat hunger*” had the following speakers:

- Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency, Mr. Khalid Bomba;
- Co-Chair of Independent Group of Scientists (2017-2019) appointed by the Secretary General for Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 and former Deputy Minister, National Development Planning Agency of Indonesia, Ms. Endah Murniningtyas;
- Sustainability and Public Affairs Manager at Pivot Bio, Ms. Keira Havens; and
- Executive Director of the Development Action Association of Ghana, Ms. Lydia Sasu.

The second panel on “*The role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in facilitating knowledge-sharing and knowledge-building and leveraging investments in agriculture and food systems to combat hunger*” had interventions from:

- Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Mr. Jeffrey Sachs;
- Senior Partnership Officer of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Ms. Ama Brandford-Arthur;
- Coordinator of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) office in the USA, Mr. Alexandre Varela; and

- Special Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cabo Verde, Ms. Eneida Rodrigues Silva.

Ms. Coco Ushiyama, Director of the UN System, African Union & Multilateral Engagement Division, World Food Programme (WFP), moderated the panel.

The event was webcast and it is available [here](#).

The main messages and summary of the interventions at the event are as follows:

Key messages

- **We are off track to meet SDG-2.** More than 820 million people in the world still suffer from chronic hunger, reversing years of steady decline. Hunger and food insecurity remain concentrated in developing countries, where the populations are predominantly rural despite rapid urbanization. About 80 percent of the extreme poor live in rural areas which have significant dependence on subsistence farming.
- **The current agricultural and food systems are failing us.** Business as usual is not a solution. Transforming food and agricultural systems by making them more efficient, resilient and sustainable is critical to win the fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Our actions must take into account the challenges posed by climate change and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.
- **Access to market, technology and agriculture finance are integral to farmers success.** We need to strengthen linkages between policy makers, agriculture research institutions, entrepreneurs and farmers.
- **Smallholder farmers are central to sustainable agriculture development.** Their productivity and income can be enhanced through education and training.
- **Youth can leverage science, technology and digitalization in support of agriculture development efforts.** Youth's growing interest and knowledge in new technologies should be harnessed to support new ideas, innovation and digitalization in the agriculture sector. It is also crucial to draw youth's attention to the entrepreneurial opportunities in the farming profession and to create incentives that will enable their participation in the agricultural economy.
- **Local and inclusive governance fosters development.** Establishing inclusive local governance mechanisms that enable multi-actor engagement (i.e. farmers, civil society, private sector, academia, urban/rural communities, women, youth, consumer associations) are crucial for implementing global agendas at local level, creating space for dialogue, effective decision-making and stimulating innovative alliances.
- **Food and agriculture are priority areas for South-South and triangular cooperation.** The BAPA+40 outcome document identifies agriculture, food security, nutrition and food safety as areas of mutual learning and coordination for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. It also emphasizes the value of promoting international cooperation to support sustainable agriculture and food systems.
- **Leverage South-South and triangular cooperation against hunger and poverty.** There is a wealth of experience in the global South with potential to improve food security and nutrition in developing countries. The need is to provide platforms to share such experiences and scale up good practices. South-South and triangular cooperation can galvanize economies, create decent jobs, improve incomes, spur innovation and stimulate entrepreneurship, which are all critical elements to overcome hunger and poverty.
- **Ending hunger requires comprehensive responses.** Hunger is caused by interconnected and systemic issues. To overcome this challenge requires high-level political commitment, comprehensive responses and collective action, including through innovation sharing and technology transfer.

Summary of the event

Opening

The President of the General Assembly highlighted the potential of agriculture policies to act as an instrument of development. He underscored the inextricable link between poverty and hunger and stressed the need to address historical and structural inequalities that have undermined efforts to end hunger. The PGA stressed the importance of the “food systems approach” and its contribution to the Decade of Action for accelerating sustainable development. He underlined the need to focus on smallholders and family farmers, especially women farmers, under the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation. In this regard, he called for scaling up local solutions adopted by agriculture communities in different parts of the world.

The FAO Director-General noted that transforming agriculture was key to ending hunger and malnutrition. He stressed the need to understand how policy, investment, innovation and institutional change can help make agri-food system transformation a driver for the 2030 Agenda. Mr. Dongyu highlighted the role of FAO, since 1996, as a partner in South-South and triangular cooperation efforts in support of 80 countries. The Director-General also apprised the meeting of FAO’s work to enhance agri-food systems transformation. Reference was made to the Hand-in-Hand Initiative outlining how FAO will work with countries and development partners to accelerate action to lift people out of poverty and hunger.

The Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation informed the meeting that there was a wealth of agricultural experience in the South that could be shared through South-South and triangular cooperation. Citing examples of countries that have achieved significant success in eradicating hunger, he mentioned: Brazil, which in two decades has transformed its vast tropical savannah into one of the world’s leading hubs of soybean production; Vietnam, which turned itself from one of the largest importers of rice into the second-largest exporter; and Malawi, where fertilizer subsidy programs turned the country into a net exporter of maize.

Panel 1 “Evidence-based policy making for sustainable agriculture and food systems to combat hunger”

Mr. Khalid Bomba (Ethiopia) shared that agricultural modernization was the engine of economic growth in Ethiopia and that two primary approaches had been effective in promoting a climate smart and sustainable agricultural transformation: a system approach to address structural challenges beyond the farm; and secondly, a robust collaboration between public sector and development partners. He mentioned as an ongoing challenge the need for better alignment between partners and their activities and explained that the creation of the Agricultural Transformation Agency in Ethiopia was a tool to respond to this challenge and serve as a catalyst for agricultural transformation and systemic change.

Ms. Endah Murniningtyas (Indonesia) reiterated the call for a food systems approach to achieve the SDG’s and 2030 Agenda, as proposed by the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report. She also stressed the need to invest in youth and engage them in the transformation of food systems. She shared the example of Aruna, demonstrating how young entrepreneurs in Indonesia were using innovation to create a fisheries e-commerce platform that helps develop coastal economy by empowering local fishermen and promoting fair, transparent and sustainable fisheries trade.

Ms. Keira Havens (Pivot Bio) presented how a private sector firm working in the space of agri-tech could support global efforts toward climate friendly sustainable agriculture. She shared various features of the groundbreaking solution developed by Pivot Bio that allows the farmers to feed their nitrogen-hungry crops in an environmentally sustainable way. The solution avoids the use of synthetic nitrogen, resulting in more productive and predictable crop yields without nutrient degradation, leaching, or runoff into waterways.

Ms. Lydia Sasu (Development Action Association) highlighted the importance of gender equality in agricultural transformation. She noted that existing policy frameworks do not always adequately recognize the multiple roles of women smallholders, the challenges they face, and the great economic and social potential they have. Ms. Sasu stressed the need to empower women to participate in policy making processes and to ensure that they have access to appropriate technologies and capacity building programs especially in remote rural areas. She shared a few examples of ongoing collaboration between development partners in pursuit of these objectives and called for scaling them up.

Panel 2 “The role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in facilitating knowledge-sharing and knowledge-building and leveraging investments in agriculture and food systems to combat hunger”

Mr. Jeffrey Sachs (UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network) stressed that the success of the 2030 Agenda hinges on the issue of financing for the SDGs at the global level. He affirmed that fighting hunger is akin to fighting poverty and that the essential challenge was not about increasing the amount of food produced but about increasing incomes, so that every person can purchase the food they need. Mr. Sachs also pointed to the value of diversification and noted that, in the USA, farm income represented only 20% of the total household income among farmers. He highlighted that a series of investments helped diversify the farm household income, including in areas such as basic infrastructure, education and skill development.

Ms. Ama Brandford-Arthur (IFAD) underscored that IFAD considers South-South and triangular cooperation as a key mechanism for delivering targeted, cost-effective and result-oriented development solutions. She stressed that South-South cooperation is particularly suitable for agricultural development since countries from the Global South have similar rural production patterns, so it is easier for them to adopt technologies and innovative solutions that are invented or discovered by other developing countries. She also presented IFAD’s Rural Poverty Portal, a web-based platform that facilitates knowledge exchange among countries.

Mr. Alexandre Varella (Brazil) shared information about technologies and innovations developed by Embrapa to increase the sustainability and efficiency of Brazilian agriculture. As examples, he mentioned the biofortification of basic food staples to improve nutritional outcomes; value-addition to local products benefitting family farmers as well as traditional populations and communities; and significant contribution toward the sustainability of agricultural and livestock systems. Mr. Varella also highlighted Embrapa’s ongoing South-South and Triangular cooperation efforts and reaffirmed his organization’s commitment to further share knowledge and experience with other developing countries to fight hunger and malnutrition.

Ms. Eneida Rodrigues Silva (Cabo Verde) shed light on the effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation to improve food production systems in Cabo Verde. She stressed the need to pay more attention to the specific needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in targeting hunger and developing their agriculture and food systems. Ms. Silva noted that Cabo Verde was experiencing drought for the third consecutive year and was seeking

South-South and Triangular Cooperation partnerships to increase the resilience of its agriculture to drought, especially through improved irrigation systems. Finally, she emphasized the need to attract youth to farming.

Among the main issues highlighted in the interactive discussion were: the importance of multilateral and cross-sectoral partnerships; the huge potential of innovation in the agriculture landscape; the value of a sustainable food systems approach; the need to strengthen South-South, Triangular and North-South cooperation; the importance of empowering women, youth, smallholder and family farmers; and the relevance of UN support to the efforts to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.
