

Script of the Ministerial Statement

H.E. Levan Davitashvili – The Vice Prime Minister and the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to express my appreciation to the organizers of this event.

A sustainable food system lies at the heart of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As Georgia nationalized the vast majority of SDG targets, the integration of the concept of sustainable food systems into the implementation of SDGs will help Georgia ultimately to carry out all aspects of the 2030 agenda.

Development of the full value chain in food systems and stimulating rural economic activity is crucial for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth in Georgia. A vital responsibility of the next decade will be to reinforce the development of quality and production technologies, which will together ensure competitiveness on both local and international markets.

Despite the implemented and ongoing reforms and development-oriented programs, the food system still faces challenges that need to be overcome as a precondition for the social-economic growth in our country.

In 2021, we conducted three stages of national dialogue on the Food Systems of the United Nations, which found the key trends to ensure sustainable food systems in the country by 2030. According to these priorities, we need to ensure a competitive value chain in the food systems, ensure effective systems for food and feed safety, veterinarian and plant protection; enable a sustainable use of natural resources, environmental protection and preservation of ecosystems; climate change mitigation and adaptation and elaborate effective systems for the crisis management, which became even more actual and crucial for the recent crisis of COVID-19.

These priorities are fully in line with Georgia's Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy of 2021-2027, where food security and food safety are especially important for the country and are one of the key priorities and obligations of the Government of Georgia. The development of the rural territories of Georgia is important for addressing issues such as food security, environmental protection, economic development, and the establishment of high quality of life and security of our population.

Competitive agricultural and non-agricultural production and helping Georgia to better adapt to deal with climate change are essential factors for the development of our food systems in the country. Signing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) created real perspectives for our country bringing Georgian products to the EU market. In addition,

implementing the EU Association Agreement saw the introduction of complex reforms in all the necessary areas, especially in the field of food safety.

A sustainable food system delivers food security and nutrition for all, and in such a way that the economic, social, and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition are firmly established. All the main elements of food systems, such as food supply chain, food environment, and consumer behaviour are of the utmost importance for Georgia.

Adequate nutrition is essential for the health and well-being of any nation, but food availability is not the only critical factor; the quality of food is also an issue that needs particular attention and efforts from all actors involved in the production, trade, and consumption of food.

Finally, let me underline that food systems transformation will be achieved through inclusive multi-stakeholder collaboration in Georgia. The involvement of the civil society sector in the policy implementation process along with the public agencies is of utmost importance. It is vital, that the activities are communicated with the direct stakeholders of food systems, such as producers, unions, associations, NGOs, scientific circles, donors, international organizations, higher educational and vocational institutions, local municipality representatives and others.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a successful meeting.