

**Pre-Summit, 26 – 28 July 2021**

**Ministerial statements**

**Video-Message by Mr Jože Podgoršek,**

**Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia**

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

According to the last SOFI Report, launched a few weeks ago, we are not on track to achieve many of the targets that we set ourselves in 2015, when we adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The number of hungry people is increasing. In 2020, between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger. Three billion people could not afford a healthy diet. Overweight and obesity continue to rise.

There are many different drivers of hunger and food insecurity. Some are linked to the unsustainable way in which we produce and consume food and others are external and difficult to predict and tackle, like conflicts, climate and weather extremes, economic crises, poverty and increasing inequalities. The situation is exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic.

Food systems and agriculture are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. They are at the centre of our lives. Through our food choices, we shape our future and the future of our planet. By opting for a healthy and sustainable diet, we contribute to a healthy and sustainable future.

This is the reason why we very much welcome the organisation of the UN Food Systems Summit and pre-Summit, where we can come together and discuss the necessary steps for food systems transformation and building the foundation for a more sustainable future.

We especially welcome the inclusivity of this process and the multi-stakeholder approach. Rooted in the human rights and the right to food approach, the Summit is people and solution oriented, looking for scalable initiatives and actions for the accelerated transition to sustainable and resilient food systems. Food systems are complex and interlinked with many sectors. This calls for a holistic approach when talking about food system transformation.

Slovenia has stepped on the path of food system transformation many years ago. Environmentally friendly agriculture, sustainable food production and consumption, quality nutrition and healthy diets, a thriving and vital rural area, which develops and grows hand in hand with our cities, are Slovenia's key priorities since its independence. Our varied and hilly landscape has always been a challenge for agriculture and food production, but, at the same time, it is an important asset. Through investing in complementary activities and ensuring

agriculture in less favoured areas, we ensure livelihoods and rural development and preserve the beautiful landscape and a rich tradition of local quality diets.

Among our many activities, we would like to highlight the promotion of sustainable healthy diets to consumers. Consumers' education and information, including through food labelling, quality schemes, food safety, plant health and animal welfare, is key if we want to achieve healthy and thriving individuals, and preserve our environment for future generations.

Many of our activities are targeted to children. While ensuring healthy meals in line with the national nutrition guidelines, and promoting local, organic and seasonal food products, including through green public procurement, the school nutrition programmes are complemented by many educational activities with the aim to facilitate healthy dietary choices for children.

An important priority for sustainable food production are small holders and family farms, which constitute the predominant form of agriculture in Slovenia. They play a key role in ensuring high quality food, produced in environmentally friendly ways, mainly through agroecological approaches and organic farming. Besides preserving the environment and natural resources, including through safeguarding biodiversity and pollinators, small-scale producers are important from the socio-cultural point of view and for their valuable contribution to the development and vitality of our rural areas. Activities aiming at improving small holders and family farmers' access to markets, knowledge, new technologies, finances and responsible investments, are crucial for food systems transformation.

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ensuring food security and good nutrition for all in a sustainable manner demands cooperation, sustainable investment, equitable distribution of income, and responsible behaviour from all actors and in all phases of the food chain – from farm to fork.

It also demands global cooperation and partnerships between all stakeholders. Finally yet importantly, it demands individual behavioural change and commitment – our daily actions and habits are crucial and the impact of sustainable and healthy dietary choices of well-informed consumers should not be underestimated.

We still have time to reverse the negative trends, but we cannot afford to wait. We need to act in accordance with the future we want. Every action – at the global, regional, national, local and individual level, towards this goal, counts.

Thank you.