



## Talking Points for Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Minister of State for Food and Water Security

### Details:

Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Minister of State for Food and Water Security, has been invited to participate at the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit, which is being held between July 26-28, 2021 in Rome, Italy. The event is a hybrid affair taking place at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome complemented by a vast virtual program and platform.

Under the leadership of UN Secretary-General António Guterres and in partnership with H.E. Mario Draghi, Prime Minister of Italy, the Pre-Summit will serve as the preparatory meeting for the Food Systems Summit in September by bringing together diverse actors from around the world to leverage the power of food systems to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our shared vision for people, planet, and prosperity.

The Pre-Summit will consolidate all of the Summit's substantive work into a common vision and set a tone of bold ambition and commitment to action. It will also deliver the latest evidence based and scientific approaches; strengthen coalitions of action.

Her Excellency will be giving the opening remarks for the “Opening Plenary – A Bold Ambition to Improve Food Systems”

### Date of event:

Monday, July 26, 2021

### Time:

10pm – 10:50am (Rome time)

### Location:

Rome (hybrid event with virtual attendance)

### Request:

Talking points for 5 minutes



## Talking Points

**“Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen...**

- It is an honour to be here today at the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit and to have the opportunity to speak to you about transforming the world’s food and agricultural systems to become more sustainable. It is a challenging task ahead of us, yet I must say that it is exciting to witness the global community work hand in hand to achieve this noble objective.

**Ladies and gentlemen...**

- It was in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit that world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the process ushering in hope of a bright and prosper future. A Future where we will not leave anyone behind and banish hunger.
- **We knew it would be a tall order from the start.** After years of steady decline in global undernourishment, levels began to increase again in 2015, the year Agenda 2030 was adopted.<sup>1</sup>
- But what we could not have foreseen at this time was the additional strain of a global pandemic that impacted food systems at every level, resulting in health and nutrition consequences of a severity and scale not seen for more than half a century.<sup>2</sup>
- It has meant that just six years from the creation of the Agenda, we are now facing the likelihood of not being able to meet the SDGs. **COVID-19 is pushing the target out of reach.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1287907/#:~:text=The%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20is,see%20a%20global%20food%20emergency.>



- The new sense of urgency has been enshrined in a plan by the United Nations – the ‘Decade of Action’ - which aims to scale-up all activities to meet the SDGs within the next 10 years.
- **The transformation of food systems has to be at the centre of this action, as it is this transformation that is the cornerstone for meeting multiple SDG agenda items and targets.**
- *The premise is simple. We can’t build a bright future for all when one tenth of the world is still going to bed on empty stomachs.*<sup>3</sup>

#### Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen...

- The contradictions in the way we currently value food are clear.
  - We produce enough to feed the world, yet we throw one third of this food away.
  - We aspire to end climate change, yet rotting leftovers in landfills are one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gas.
  - 690 million people experience regular hunger, yet we have an epidemic of obesity.
- Changing the way we think about, produce and value food are the essential underpinnings of a sustainable food system – **one that produces more, wastes less, enhances nutrition and engages more meaningfully with consumers.**
- The UAE believes that it is an important partner in driving this necessary transformation. Creating enhanced and resilient food value chain has been a national priority for us because of the extreme challenges we face in providing food in arid and marginal environments.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldvision.org/hunger-news-stories/world-hunger-facts>



- **At the heart of our efforts is the National Food Security Strategy, which has the adoption and implementation of technology and innovation throughout the food value chain as a key pillar.**
- Our country is now home to a vibrant AgTech sector which deploys some of the world's most advanced technologies. These are helping us to overcome our extreme climate, increase our local production, and preserve our most valuable natural resource - water.
- On the other hand, the secondary food industry plays a major role in managing and ensuring a vital role of the food security to drive not only sustainable food stocks yet acts as key economic and social opportunities to sustainably grow the country.
- As a result of our efforts, we have been able to produce and become a net exporter of some commodities such as sugar, a food staple that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to grow in the UAE. **This is a testament to the power of technology.**
- As well as enhancing our self-sufficiency to a certain degree, the National Food Security strategy has enabled us to aim at being a leader in innovative food production through initiatives such as **desert greening, aquaculture, and marginal environment crop growth.**
- It is because of our pioneering work in these areas, our commitment to attracting top agricultural technology talent, and our investment in promising initiatives that our long-term aim with the National Food Security Strategy is for **the UAE to become a world-leading hub in innovation-driven food security by 2051.**
- ***Our goal is not only to become an exporter of food, but also to be an exporter of knowledge and innovations.***
- ***In 2020, I led a national team to develop a comprehensive plan tackling 10 areas of improvement to enable transforming our food systems to adopt technology, enhance its capability to innovate and become more sustainable and resilient. Our National action plan has 6 priority areas that varies from financing, adoption of urban farming approaches via allocating modern agriculture zones, providing insurance service for the agriculture and others. It is a comprehensive 26 action***



***point plan that we aim to enforce via regulatory improvements, allocating resources, creation of national policies and enabling the private sector to expand the Food and Ag. Technology sector.***

- ***The values that we adopted centered around agility, resiliency, ease of doing business, competitiveness and sustainably managing the natural resources.***
- Central to achieving this goal is partnership and we are working closely with governments, the private sector, NGOs and academia to elevate the UAE's entire food value chain.
- And this is why we are employing our resources to further advance research and development to support the recently **launched UAE – US initiative, Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate – 'AIM for Climate.'**
- The initiative has the goals of increasing and accelerating global agricultural innovation and R&D over the next 5 years to address climate change.
- We also recognise that change has to be rooted in the community. With this in mind, the UAE community is one of our most important food security partners. In order to bring everyone along in our endeavours, we involve all members of society so that our country is united in transforming the way we produce, consume and think about food.
- When talking about partners, we have to highlight the United Nations as an extremely important food security partner to the UAE and one that is pivotal in helping us reach our targets.

### **Ladies and gentlemen...**

- The next 9 years will be the most important for all stakeholders in meeting the SDGs and the UAE will continue to work closely with the UN towards sustainable development.



- I look forward to the outcomes of our meetings and the forthcoming United Nations' Food Systems Summit in New York in September, with this undoubtedly one of the most important of all food summits held to date.
- **Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a food security crossroad. Let's work together to make this decade one where hunger finally becomes history.**

Thank you.”

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