

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General
at the Regional Conference on Food Loss and Waste Reduction
in Europe and Central Asia
5 October 2022, Istanbul, Türkiye**

**Honorable Chairman,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a privilege and pleasure for me to attend this significant Regional Conference on Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Europe and Central Asia.

Let me extend my sincere gratitude to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of Netherlands and Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) for hosting this important event in the beautiful city of Istanbul and for inviting contribution of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to this august event.

Distinguished participants,

Food security, characterized as access to safe and sufficient food, is affected by economic crises. Driven by conflicts, extreme climate-related events, such as historic multi-season droughts and floods; economic shocks, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods, incomes, and food prices; and a multitude of other threats to human, animal and crop health, the food security outlook for 2022 and beyond is grim.

This is compounded by the war in Ukraine, which is further exacerbating this already dire situation. I note with grave concern that the newly-released 2022 Global Report on Food Crises indicates that the number of people facing acute food insecurity greatly increased from 135 million in 2019 to 193 million in 2021 in the 53 countries most in need of assistance, and that nearly 40 million people across 36 countries experienced emergency levels of acute food insecurity, just one step away from famine.

At this point, I would like to underline the importance of the United Nation's "Black Sea Grain Initiative", an "unprecedented agreement" on the resumption of Ukrainian grain exports via the Black Sea, which was signed here, in Istanbul, thanks to mediation of H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Honourable President of Republic of Türkiye. This agreement is a significant step to overcome the global food crisis.

In light of the mentioned circumstances, food loss and waste make the current situation worse. The fact that substantial amounts of food are produced but not consumed by humans has substantial negative impacts from environmental, social and economic aspects.

According to the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Food Waste Index Report 2021, around 931 million tons of food waste were generated in 2019, 61 percent of which came from households, 26 percent from food service and 13 percent from retail. This indicates that around 17 percent of total global food production may be wasted, including 11 percent in households, 5 percent in food service and 2 percent in retail.

Estimates indicate that 8-10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed. It means that greenhouse gases (GHG) have been emitted and the land, water and energy resources, labor and capital used in the production of food have been wasted for no reason. Food waste also burdens waste management systems, exacerbates food insecurity, making it a major contributor to the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, as well as pollution and waste.

Food loss and waste undermine the sustainability of our food systems. The food systems cannot be resilient if they are not sustainable, hence it needs to focus on the adoption of integrated approaches designed to reduce food loss and waste. Actions are required globally and locally to maximize the use of the produced food.

The introduction of technologies, innovative solutions including e-commerce platforms for marketing, investments in training, better food packaging and relaxing on regulations and standards, redistributing safe surplus food to those in need through food banks, shorter value chains through farmers markets and rural-urban linkages, investing more to

strengthen infrastructure and logistics, including sustainable cold chains and cooling technologies are keys to implementing this transformative change.

Food waste reduction offers multi-faceted wins for people and planet such as improving food security, addressing climate change, saving money and reducing pressures on land, water, biodiversity and waste management systems. Successfully tackling food loss and waste means increasing the availability and access to food, reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture and shifting towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption as per the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.

Distinguished Delegates,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals is our blueprint to tackle the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, from conflict to climate shocks, to inequality and poverty. Reducing food loss and waste is crucial to achieving Zero Hunger worldwide and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns). Target 12.3 calls for halving per capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030, as well as reducing food losses along the production and supply chains.

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as a regional inter-governmental organization is hence committed to the Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, the accomplishment of which will lead to greater food security, health and welfare.

Given the magnitude of the above mentioned problems and while acknowledging that the improvement of the situation, globally and regionally requires pervasive and multi-faceted action at all levels, ECO Secretariat in cooperation with ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) and FAO updated and adopted the ECO Regional Program for Food Security (ECO-RPFS) according to the post-pandemic situation during the 7th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (July 6, 2022, Tashkent) and will accordingly make its utmost to facilitate moving towards the implementation stage aimed at improving and enhancing ECO Member States resilience to future shocks and ensuring food security.

Moreover, at this high-level meeting, honorable Ministers agreed to enhance the institutional capacity of Regional Coordination Center for Food Security, deciding to make it a self-sufficient ECO institution or specialized body. This center will serve as a crucial instrument for the food security of our region.

Dear participants,

The post-pandemic conditions require strengthened regional and global cooperation. With eight years left to reach targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an urgent need to accelerate action to ensure food security and reduce food loss and waste. Exchanging relevant experiences among countries, especially good practices and innovations (for example, in packing, labeling and marketing), should contribute to the design of global and regional strategies and mechanisms aimed at reducing food loss and waste.

I am confident that greater collaboration amongst countries, regional and international organizations will lead us to successfully secure our shared objective for sustainable development of the agriculture sector.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to express my firm belief that your active engagement and brainstorming will undoubtedly contribute to the overall success of this event.

Thank you.