

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General
at the International Conference on Food Security
Samarkand, 7 September 2023

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a distinct privilege and honour for me to represent the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at this very important International Conference on Food Security.

I congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for organizing the event in the magnificent city of Samarkand, and thank them for inviting and giving me this opportunity to express my reflection on this very crucial issue that bears global magnitude.

Distinguished Participants,

Unfortunately, the food insecurity is increasing across the globe due to several adverse and inapt conditions, most notably the rising poverty, growing population, malnutrition, food waste, lack of relevant public policies, environmental issues as well as the COVID-inflicted prolonged disruptions in supply chains.

Another negative aspect that appears to aggravate the problem is the global tensions and stresses. The ongoing international disputes and the associated impediments in smooth food supplies through some of the international land and sea routes, and the global trade barriers have been impacting on the millions of peoples across the globe.

Food inflation remains high in the world, with dozens of countries experiencing double digit inflation. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), 349 million people across 79 countries are acutely food insecure. Following a frequent deterioration, the undernourishment is also on the rise. In view of the globally hindered food supplies, this situation is expected to worsen coupled with the current food security challenges.

Domestic food price inflation remains high around the world, affecting almost every low and middle-income country, alongside over 80% of high income developed nations. Reflecting the persistent inflationary trends, the relevant data for 2023 shows high inflation in most low-and middle-income countries, with inflation higher than 5% in 63.2% of low-income countries, 79.5% of lower-middle-income countries, and 67% of upper-middle-income countries, with many experiencing double-digit inflation.

Dear Delegates,

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals remain our roadmap for moving together to attain, inter alia, an all-encompassing food security as per SDG's Goal 2 that envisages a Zero Hunger by 2030.

Relevantly, the ECO Secretariat in collaboration with ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) and in line with ECO Regional Program for Food Security (ECO-RPFS) is ardently pursuing our shared food security targets, along with making rigorous efforts for resilience building to meet any future shocks and food security challenges in the region.

Within this context, I would also like to recall organization of the 7th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture hosted by Uzbekistan last year in July. This important ministerial event remained quite successful, providing some tangible and productive recommendations to contribute to further development and improvement of regional food security and agriculture sector.

However, any long-term solution will, inter alia, require some immediate measures, including reducing carbon emissions, transforming crops as the climate crisis grows fast and minimizing dependence on chemical fertilizers. Moreover, reliable local production, well-functioning markets, strong and responsive governments as well as open international trade are essential to strengthening food systems, especially in the food-insecure countries. A joint application and implementation of this approach will need an improved coordination and strong nexus amongst the countries as well as regional and international organizations.

While wishing this forum a great success, I believe that regular organization of such interactive gatherings and events would be more and more beneficial to help us secure our global food security target.

Thank you hosts and all the eminent delegates.