



Statement
by H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General
at the 37th Ministerial Meeting of the Near East Regional Conference
4 March 2024, Jordan (hybrid mode)

**Honorable Chairman,
Distinguished Ministers,
Honorable Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a privilege to address this significant 37th Ministerial Meeting of the Near East Regional Conference (NERC-37). Let me extend my sincere gratitude to the FAO and the host for inviting contribution of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to this august event. I wish lively and fruitful deliberations for the current meeting, which is dealing with a subject of prime importance to the contemporaneous human life and continues to pose and inflate agriculture and food security challenges.

Distinguished Participants,

Agricultural development is one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and feed a projected of 10 billion people by 2050. It plays a major role in economic growth and development and also is a substantial source of rural income and employment. The pandemic and its ensuing economic rebound, the war in Ukraine and the soaring prices of food and agricultural inputs, all played out differently across regions and populations, with differing impacts on hunger and food insecurity. Many countries were hit hard by higher food import bills, while others benefitted from the higher prices. Nowadays, assessment of the global and regional food security situation reflects a world that is on the verge to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic when the war erupted in Ukraine in early 2022, involved two major producers of agricultural commodities in the world and sent shockwaves through commodity markets.

Excellencies,

Many food systems are unsustainable and fail to ensure food security and to offer affordable nutritious and healthy diets. Transition to sustainable food systems is critical to achieve the world's development goals, end hunger, malnutrition and poverty while preserving the environment. Crucial steps to ensure food security across the world will need to include a more effective distribution of food supplies and a drastic change in the food systems. Our goal should be making sure no one goes hungry, by decreasing demand in wealthier nations while increasing supply in

developing countries. In this regard, we also need to invest in more sustainable agricultural practices and new technologies and educate societies on the repercussions of food waste.

Distinguished Colleagues,

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. Economic Cooperation Organization 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 accordingly makes 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.

Excellencies,

In light of the mentioned circumstances, countries need to work together to strengthen cooperation during post-pandemic, which has affected more or less all regions across the globe. Building resilience for the future will require a continued comprehensive and coordinated efforts to support efficient production, facilitate trade, improve the functioning of markets and enhance the role of the private sector, accelerate innovation and joint planning and invest in food systems transformation.

I am confident that greater collaboration amongst countries, regional and international organizations will lead us to successfully secure our shared objectives for sustainable development of food security and agricultural sector. To conclude my remarks, I would like to express my firm belief that your active engagement and fruitful brainstorming at this regional meeting will inevitably contribute to its overall success.

Thank you.