

ECOSOC Special Meeting
Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon:
Reducing risks and capturing opportunities
Remarks by the Director of the FAO Liaison Office to the UN
Ms. Carla Mucavi
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1. Thank you for giving me the floor.
2. The current El Niño is one of the most intense and widespread weather phenomenon of the last one hundred years.
3. It has affected the food security and nutritional status of more than 60 million people around the globe. And of the almost 3 billion US dollars needed in the humanitarian response, almost 80 percent is related to food security and agriculture.
4. As such, it is not an exaggeration to say that this is a food and agricultural crisis.
5. While El Niño is declining in strength, its impacts on the agricultural sector are still felt. Harvests in several parts of the world have already failed or are expected to fail. In Southern Africa alone, over 32 million people are affected by severe drought.
6. These figures are likely to rise in the coming months, also affected by a probable La Niña phenomenon.
7. We need partnerships to respond effectively. No single agency or government can tackle events such as El Niño. Even in the case of a country like Ethiopia, whose government is leading a commendable response to El Niño.

8. Without concerted international support, economic and social gains made by many developing countries can be reversed. Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals will be affected.
9. On the other hand, early action can go a long way in saving lives and preserving livelihoods at a much lower cost than acting after disaster has hit.
10. Let me give you one example. FAO and the Government of Somalia implemented an early action programme focusing on flood mitigation measures along the Shabelle River following flood forecasts.
11. As a result, over 9 thousand hectares of farmland were preserved from flooding. With a total investment of approximately 1.7 million dollars, around 6.5 million US dollars in maize production was saved--a return of nearly 4 times.
12. Building on this and other successful examples of early action, at a meeting last March in Rome, FAO, IFAD, OCHA and WFP agreed to develop a protocol outlining steps to be taken collectively, within defined timelines, to ensure early and coordinated responses to future El Niño and La Niña events.
13. To end let me recall the Secretary-General's report for the World Humanitarian Summit. He called for the international community to adopt an approach that reinforces, rather than replaces national and local systems, anticipates rather than waits for crises, and moves beyond the traditional silos between humanitarian and development action. Now with El Niño, we must all do just that **transforming the commitment of "building resilience" into action, right now.**
14. Thank you for your attention.