



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

**Transforming Agrifood systems and fostering inclusive rural development in the context of COVID-19 to end rural poverty
2 December 2020, 1pm-3pm (EST)**

**Opening statement
President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poverty imposes massive human suffering. It is the most pervasive violation of human rights. It is also the root cause of social and economic instability and most of the political and security problems across the world.

Around one billion people – 15 percent of the world’s population – live in poverty. Eighty percent of them are in rural areas.

Nearly 600 million people go hungry every day. Today, 20 countries face acute food insecurity. Poverty and hunger are inter-related. It is thus only right that eradication of poverty and zero hunger are the first two among the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The COVID-19 Pandemic will further push around 100 million people into extreme poverty and add 83 to 132 million to the total number of undernourished around the world.

Excellencies and dear colleagues,

It is much more important today that we protect our food systems, which are the main source of livelihoods for nearly 4.5 billion people.

To combat hunger and reduce poverty, action is required at both the national and international level.

At the national level priority must be accorded to expand food production with new farming methods, improved seeds, better water utilization, new technologies access to credit, enhanced transport and connections. We need to mobilize adequate investment in sustainable food systems, especially critical infrastructures including such means storage facilities and transport to assure market access for remote and small farmers in rural areas.

The most prominent example in this regard is the targeted approach adopted by Peoples Republic of China and the “Green Lanes” created by the Chinese government to ease transport, production, and distribution of agricultural inputs and food products.

The cooperation between Pakistan and the People’s Republic of China under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor now encompasses also the promotion of agricultural production in Pakistan. This will be a vital element of our strategy to combat hunger and poverty.

However, apart from the direct attack on rural poverty at national level, we need to address its systemic causes of poverty and hunger. At the international level, the structures of finance, production in trade must be made more fair and equitable developing countries must be helped to recover from the COVID crisis, to realize the SDGs and to ward of the impacts of climate change. The kind of facilities and funding facilities which were mentioned by Ambassador Jun will be essential in this endeavor.

Dear Colleagues,

Subsidies by some major industrial countries have led to chronic overproduction dumping of surpluses and distortions in global markets. This has made it impossible for small farmers in developing countries to produce food at competitive prices. Reform of the International agricultural system is therefore essential to make these trade practices fair and equitable.

It is also important that breakthroughs in new agricultural technologies to enhance food production; improve seed quality;

and efficient water utilization are shared with developing countries on preferential terms.

The current crisis has put into bold relief the importance of digital technologies. Urgent actions are required to bridge the digital divide within and among countries.

This will be more crucial for agriculture produce of which is relatively short shelf life. Access to digital technologies for small farmers would also help in overcoming the exploitative middlemen in the trade.

Excellencies,

I am happy to note that this year's High Level Political Forum would include in-depth discussions on SDG1 and 2 – No Poverty and Zero Hunger – as part of focus on SDGs this year.

I also expected the forum for financing on sustainable development, the forum on Science Technology and Innovation, will discuss financial and technological barriers in our efforts for poverty eradication and technological diffusion for improving our agri-food system and efforts for eradication of rural poverty.

I also hope that the upcoming Food Systems Summit next year would provide an opportunity to agree on comprehensive approach to achieve the SDGs especially to eliminate poverty and hunger.

I thank you.