

15 November 2009

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,  
President of the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
before the Second Summit of the First Ladies of the Non-Aligned  
Movement on “Food Security and Women’s Access to Resources”**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like at the outset to thank Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak for her initiative to hold the second NAM First Ladies Summit, as a follow up to the First Summit that took place in Sharm Elsheikh last July. It is my conviction that initiatives such as this one reflect a growing global awareness of the important role that women play in their respective societies, in particular in the developing ones. It is, therefore, vital that they are represented at the highest levels of the decision-making processes, and that they contribute to the enhancement of their societies and peoples. We need to work together to ensure that women are awarded better access to resources, job opportunities, healthcare and education. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the effort exerted in bringing the developing countries together to attain such objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Equitable, effective, and sustainable agriculture and rural development cannot be pursued without explicit recognition of the tremendous contribution of women. Such contribution is evident in the role women play in food production, especially when it comes to determining and guaranteeing food security and well-being for the entire household.

The food price volatility of the recent past and the continuing high prices of food products combined with the economic crisis, climate change, and conflict have, led to a dramatic and unacceptable rise in the number of people who are hungry and malnourished

The General Assembly of the United Nations, which I have the honor to preside over its 64th session, has attempted to address these critical problems, and had given them highest priority in the international development agenda. Moreover, the General Assembly and the United Nations System are currently dealing with the negative socio-economic, legal and political impacts of these global crises on women.

Worldwide, women and especially rural women are the mainstay of agricultural sectors and food systems. Women in developing countries are responsible for producing half of the world’s food goods. Yet they remain the most disadvantaged group in the world. This is due to the limited access women

have to productive resources and services, especially access to land, to credit, to agricultural inputs, to education, training as well as to research and appropriate technology.

Currently less than 2 percent of land is owned by women and only 10 percent of the credit allowances are extended to them, mainly given to the national legislation and customary law. Women's access to technological services is limited. Furthermore, their participation in cooperatives and in the decision making levels remains low.

Gender bias and gender blindness persist: farmers are still generally perceived as "male" by policy-makers, development planners and agricultural service deliverers. When setting strategies for sustainable food security, we need to enhance female-headed households and invest in rural women as the most efficient and effective strategy.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Providing food security for the 9 billion people who will inhabit the planet in 2050 will require a reduction in poverty and in gender inequality, a doubling of food production, an improvement in food distribution, and greater protection of the environment.

We have to take the necessary steps to enable all farmers, particularly women from countries most vulnerable to climate change to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change through appropriate technologies and practices that improve the resilience of farming systems.

Gender equality and empowerment of women are vital. Our policies need to approach and must encourage active involvement of women in planning and decision making processes, women's education, improve their access to productive resources and opportunities, in addition to bigger investments in women's health and nutrition.

The international community is required to provide greater financial and technical resources to assist developing countries to implement gender sensitive national development strategies.

In this regard I must encourage Member States and all stakeholders to continue developing tools that offer useful and detailed insight of the role of women in development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is time for us to come together and develop home-grown strategies that would anticipate future food crises and the means to tackle them. I believe that the coming year or two will be critical for many of our developing countries, in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Many anticipate that the effects of climate change and the financial crisis would be clearer, and many in our regions will increasingly be affected. We must heed the call for collective endeavor in addressing the global challenges we all face. I am committed, through this session of the General Assembly, to push forward the development agenda. In this context, I will spare no effort in supporting the establishment of a unified, composite Gender entity within the UN system. As the process will commence early next year, I will count on your support to achieve this objective. I will also continue to count on your support in the preparations for the General Assembly Summit on the follow up on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals that will take place in September 2010. I would like to invite, through you, the Civil Society in your

respective countries to participate actively in this preparatory process. I intend to hold wide scope hearings in New York for the Civil Society and NGOs during the first half of next year, in preparation for this Summit.

Finally, I would like to commend the work that you are doing, and wish you great success in your tremendous efforts. I thank you once again for your kind invitation to be here with you this afternoon.