

**Statement delivered by the Chairperson of the Near East
on behalf of the Near East Group members**

CFS 38th Special session May 11th, 2012

Chairperson, Honourable Delegates, Director-General, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am making this statement on behalf of the Near East Region Group.

Chairperson! This is an occasion for celebration because we are on the threshold of a new era in sustainable agriculture and in support of smallholders who tilt the soil for a dignified living. Through hard work, lengthy and intense negotiations and our collective determination to reach positive results, we as Member Nations, civil societies and NGOs, have produced a monumental document that takes us one step further in combating hunger and attaining world food security. So, it will be fair to say that we deserve to take pride of what we have achieved with our collective effort.

Chairperson! Near East Group played an outstanding role with its effective contribution, valuable and timely inputs, and most importantly showing flexibility for reaching consensus after long and intensive negotiations, which made the Guideline be finalized and concluded and in this occasion I would like to appreciate all their constructive efforts in this regard.

Chairperson! A successful outcome does not come by easily. It needs a good forum and an effective leadership. We can now say with pride that the Open Ended Working Group was the right forum. As to the leadership, the members of the Near East Region wish to express their sincere thanks to Professor Gregory Myers, the Chairperson of the Open Ended Working Group, for his dedication, stewardship and wisdom in bringing the negotiations to a successful end. He worked hard but patiently and remained focused. We also wish to express our thanks to Co-Chair, Ms Elizabeth Kuitashvili, for her valuable contribution and by keeping us updated and on track.

We are grateful to friends of the Chair, members of the FAO Secretariat and representatives of CSOs and NGOs for their valuable contributions in finalizing the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests. Members of the Near East Region also wish to thank the former Chairperson of the CFS, Mr. Noel de Luna, and yourself as the current Chairperson. You both provided the guidance at critical junctures when we badly needed it.

Chairperson! This is not the end. In fact it is a good beginning for hard work ahead of us. The implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines needs to be taken most seriously by all Member Nations and with all the needed help. While leadership for implementation rests with the government of each Member Nation and within the context of its judicial system, other stakeholders, whether internal or external, have their share of responsibility to help in the process.

FAO, as the inspirer and prime mover of the Voluntary Guidelines, has a special role in assisting the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines and in the monitoring and evaluation of the progress achieved. We hope to see a robust supportive programme for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines in the PWB 2014-2015, including a proactive advocacy plan and a strategy of resource mobilization in support of national initiative.

Thank you Chairperson and thank you all.