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I would like to very warmly thank the organisers of the World Policy Conference for the honour of asking me to speak about Burkina Faso's experience in implementing food security strategies and policies.

I would like to speak about our food security experience in three points.

- First, the context: what are the characteristics of food security in Burkina Faso?
- Second, the instruments and institutions that allow us to ensure good governance of food security.
- Lastly, the challenges. What are they? In the context of climate change and flawed markets, how can the food supply be increased to meet rapidly rising demand?

I will conclude my talk on the last point.

It is useful to recall that in our country, Burkina Faso, agriculture is the engine of growth, accounting for between 30 and 35% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing a livelihood, until now, for approximately 86% of the working population, an extremely high figure that dwarfs the levels seen in the developed countries, especially Europe. Farming is the main source of income for most people, particularly the poorest. Which leads me to my last point: 44% of Burkina Faso's population lives below the poverty line. In Burkina Faso, the face of poverty is overwhelmingly rural.

Despite the involvement of 86% of the population in agriculture, food insecurity remains a major cause of concern for some sectors of the population because of climate variations, which means we have significant slumps in output from one season to the next. That is why the issue of food security has really become pivotal at the central and local government levels.

What are the features of food security in our country? First, the food supply is based on domestic output made up of cereals, food crops, fruits and vegetables, non-timber forest products and livestock products. But because of climate variability, the coverage rate of our cereal needs, depending on the year, ranges between 96% and 128%. This situation is primarily due to weather and poor harvesting methods. To these causes must be added predators such as locusts and other kinds of pests that appear from time to time.

We also import food. Burkina Faso is a major rice consumer, but unfortunately domestic output is not enough to meet demand. We also import wheat, which is not grown in Burkina Faso. Attempts to cultivate it have been unsuccessful so far.

Another key factor of food security is accessibility, both physical and economic. Despite relatively high farm output, a large proportion of our population is undernourished because of poverty. We also have infrastructure problems, in particular the quality of roads and lack of storage and transport infrastructure, which reduce food accessibility year round. Lastly, we have poor access to information, which creates a sharp asymmetry that has significant repercussions on the performance of agricultural markets. Today we have areas producing a surplus, but lack of information and transparency on agricultural markets means people do not have access to food at reasonable prices.

There are also problems involving how food is used, due primarily to lack of education, with major implications for health. We have nutritional problems in areas of high cereal production. Despite high farm output, cultural aspects are the root causes of nutritional problems quite simply because of the lack of education, which keeps people from adopting a quantitatively and qualitatively varied diet.

That is why we in Burkina Faso have been thinking about a number of mechanisms, in particular institutions and instruments to increase food security. The first thing we did was establish a food security strategy whose main aim is to bring together the conditions necessary to facilitate households' access to food. We also set up institutions to



ensure the governance of food security. Then, we created a national food security council, which is the central food and nutritional security planning body. It is important to note that State organisations (ministries and decentralised structures), civil society, the private sector and development partners ensure the governance of food security because we understand that food security is multi-dimensional. The State alone, with all the good will in the world, cannot guarantee food security. In addition, civil society, which has a key role to play, but also and above all the private sector, must become increasingly involved. Today we need many investments in agriculture, and it is illusory to think that the State, even with backing from technical and financial partners, can be the only investor. We have a certain number of investments but I will not dwell on them here.

With regard to governance, the institutions include not only food security decision-making bodies but also, and above all, executive bodies, in particular bodies to implement and organise information systems (especially the market information system and alert systems) that enable the government and all the partners to target areas of food insecurity. Combining these tools helps identify areas of food insecurity and populations at risk. There are also other tools, such as food stock management tools that help keep stocks up and cope with food security problems when times are lean. In addition, there are structures that manage intervention and food security logistics.

It is important to say that this system is not just operational on the central level. It also functions on the decentralised level to enable local authorities and decentralised services to identify target populations and become involved in managing food security on a daily basis.

What must be said about the food security strategy I have just talked about? It is based on a number of international frameworks and principles, especially the Millennium Development Goals. MDG 1 gives priority to reducing hunger and extreme poverty and to a number of global principles laid down by the FAO (the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition). We have tried to integrate regional principles on the national level, in particular the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which lists a number of priorities on which national priorities must be based in order to ensure more coherence.

The last point of my talk addresses the challenges we must overcome to boost agricultural development in order to achieve sustainable food security. We have built the instruments and developed the strategies. But what are our goals and challenges? What can be done to ensure the sustainable availability of food? The answer depends on solving water management issues. Today, rainfall is our farmers' main source of water. The main concern is to use technologies resilient enough to store what little rainwater does fall, and also to use varieties adapted to the context, varieties adapted to floods as well as droughts. We have many proposals from agricultural researchers, who have developed numerous varieties adapted to Burkina Faso's climate. But now the challenge lies in getting rural households to adopt them.

The second solution for food availability has to do with irrigation. Most of the water our farmers use comes from rainfall. Irrigated land only accounts for approximately 2 to 5% of the food supply, so there is a long way to go in this area. It is therefore a priority.

The other priority is to settle land security issues. Today land security is indispensable in our country for spurring national and international investment in agriculture. The rules governing land ownership are overwhelmingly based on the traditional system, which leaves out many people, including youth and women, who make up most the population. How can land ownership laws be crafted to promote access of these two segments of the population to land and make investments safe? The necessary conditions must be created to facilitate young people's access to land: they are a great opportunity for Africa but also a threat if the problem of youth unemployment is not solved. Agriculture has always been the main source of livelihood for young people in our countries. It is indispensable to boost investments in agriculture in order to create decent jobs for them.

In Maputo, Heads of State pledged to earmark at least 10% of their budgets for agriculture, but that commitment still goes unfulfilled in many countries. Burkina Faso devotes 14% of the national budget to agriculture. It is important for governments in the region to earmark a large share of their budgets to agriculture, and especially to family farms, which are still the backbone of agriculture in our countries.

With regard to accessibility, we must work on implementing policies that reduce poverty, decrease inequality and fight exclusion. We must do everything we can to solve the problem of availability by improving transfers, and then by



creating sufficiently transparent market information systems. We already have market information systems, but the main challenge is to ensure that the data is produced and shared in real time. The systems we currently have use old data, which means people, especially households, cannot make transactions in real time at affordable prices.

Geographical accessibility is a major factor in food security. Today we have large areas of agricultural production that are, unfortunately, so hard to reach that surplus food from these places cannot be moved to the main areas of consumption. This is a huge challenge that we must overcome.

Lastly, there is the issue of the food supply's stability. What needs to be done? Storage capacity must be increased. Today, growers are forced to practically give their products away at harvest time, to sell them at ridiculously low prices for lack of storage possibilities, only to buy them back at certain times of year at double or even triple the price. So storage capacity must be increased to let growers decide when to sell their products. Next, a lot of work must be done on conservation and post-harvest techniques, because a substantial share of our output is lost during the harvest and storage periods.

The last point involves nutrition. As I have already said, some farming areas produce surpluses. Paradoxically, these are the places where nutrition still poses a major challenge because of the lack of a varied, balanced diet. Oddly, these high-output areas have relatively high malnutrition levels. On this point, our challenge is to identify "vulnerable" people. It's one thing to say we're intervening to solve the problem of food insecurity; it's quite another to ensure that those interventions are as effective and as efficient as possible. This raises the problem of targeting vulnerable groups. Easier said than done; it is hard to locate vulnerable groups in the field. The methodology is really politicised, and we arrive at situations where food aid, necessary as it may be, does not really go where it should.

In conclusion, I would say that today in our country food security is a top priority for the Government and all the players supporting us with their development actions. We are doing our utmost to ensure good governance of food security and involve all the stakeholders, the government, the private sector and civil society in including as many players as possible in the governance of food security in Burkina Faso. Thank you.