

**Opening Remarks by the Chairman, APAARI  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Bangkok; 14 July 2017**

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am very pleased and highly honoured to chair the APAARI Executive Committee Meeting. This is the first EC meeting under my chairmanship. On behalf of APAARI and on my own behalf I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the EC members, and special invitees

The Asia-Pacific Region is home to nearly 60 per cent of the world's population (4.4 billion people). The region is highly diversified with different levels of socioeconomic development, rates of economic growth, per capita income, agro-ecologies and contribution of agriculture to the economies, and degree of vulnerability to climatic change. APAARI, being a strategic regional platform, should be able to contribute to agricultural development in the region.

The region has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years and consequently made impressive progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, large disparities persist amount sub-regions, nations, within geographies, and different sections of our societies. Most poor continue to be denied their share of the benefits from the economic growth. Eighteen per cent of the region's population (772 million people) still live on less than USD 1.25 per day. Rising incomes and purchasing power are placing pressure on food supplies, driving an increase in income inequality and raising questions of future sustainability. Many of the poorest people in the region are still small agricultural producers, hampered by low productivity and inadequate access to resources and output markets. Gender inequality and disengagement of youth in agriculture also persist to hamper rural development efforts.

Malnutrition/ under- nutrition remains a significant barrier to socioeconomic development in the region. Despite recent progress, the region is still home to approximately 490 million chronically hungry people, which is over 60 per cent of the World's undernourished. The region also faces environmental challenges. Population growth and rising incomes have placed pressure on natural resources creating fierce competition for water, land and energy. Deforestation, soil degradation, overfishing and air pollution are emerging issues, which will create future challenges to agri-food systems. Therefore, the agri-food systems development remains at the centre of the region's key challenges and opportunities.

In this context, APAARI can play crucial role as a regional platform in agricultural research and innovation. It has modest but critical mass of representations by NARIs (National Agricultural Research Institutions), NAROs (National Agricultural Research Organizations), CGIAR Centres, advanced research organizations (e.g. World Vegetable Centre), and higher education sector. It is well positioned in terms of its specified mandate of knowledge sharing, partnership

and networking, capacity development and advocacy. APAARI Vision 2030 provides overall guidance to strengthening of agri-food research and innovations systems in the region. On the basis of this framework, APAARI has recently embarked on finding optimal set of pathways towards the strengthening of these systems. APAARI Strategic Plan 2017-22 approved by the Executive Committee will show the direction and path for implementing APAARI activities in the coming years in order to contribute towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

There is tremendous scope and value of well-developed, coordinated and networked agri-food research and innovations in the region. It will provide growth in intellectual capacity and contribute to the necessary synergy, regional integration, and complimentarily to combined efforts. APAARI, the agri-food research and innovation systems (AFRIS), their partners and stakeholders should come together in collective actions in strengthening the research and innovation systems in the region. Such strengthened systems with complementary contributions from relevant organization make enhanced contribution to agri-food systems development. .

Over the last 25 years, APAARI has made a substantial contribution in promoting, and advocating agricultural research for development. It has proved to be a vibrant regional platform for effective collaboration, promotion and advocacy. With the renewed and objectively designed pathways, APAARI will rise to new heights.

APAARI should adapt to transformative change in important areas of governance and its development; especially strengthening its capacity and resources in areas of collaboration, knowledge brokering, capacity building and advocacy. All these need to be ensured through enhanced and proactive partnership among APAARI members, partners, and stakeholders.

We need to move on from the recent approach of agricultural research for development (ARD) to strengthened agri-food research and innovations for sustainable overall development. This will require APPARI to be a multi- stakeholder platform mirroring change at regional level for innovative agri-food systems.

The Association needs to be the one based on ownership and self-commitments to the change agenda. The Association should also be a mechanism to catalyse change among others, those who matter in bringing positive changes in a synergistic way. For this to happen, role of the APAARI as Association and roles of its members, partners, agri-food research and innovation systems, should be seen to the primary source of change agenda.

In today's session of our Executive Committee, we are challenged to deal with a number of pertinent agenda items of crucial importance. Therefore, we all look forward to our collective deliberations and contributions towards positive outcomes of this meeting.

Thank you all.

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