

**SPEECH NOTES MADE BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. MEHMET MEHDI EKER,  
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MEETING OF THE OECD COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AT MINISTERIAL  
LEVEL**

**1. Recent years have been tumultuous for the global food and agriculture system.  
What opportunities and challenges will the next 20 years bring?**

- **Agriculture has been rediscovered with the help of triggering effects of recent food and financial crises besides the climate change concerns. In respect to climate change, foreseeable future holds advantages and disadvantages for the different regions of the world. There would be winners and losers within the several decades.**
- **The issue is complex and not easy to manage, since the concerns are controversial and competing. There seems to be “one size fits all” approach is unaffordable. What is more is that the global food crisis has shown how fragile the world food security is. All international organizations have failed to monitor the supply and balance of food.**
- **Therefore, there should be a mechanism propelled by related international organizations such as OECD, FAO, WTO to estimate the production and consumption of food, climatic variations in main production areas and global food supply and demand relationship. There should be at least a framework agreement among the countries on how to share the responsibilities between the losers and winners. The new agricultural policies have to be developed globally and hence, there should be a competent, credible international institution to guide, monitor and advice the global community.**
- **The international community has the ability to develop a new agricultural system. That might be painful for some period for some people and could be a source of unrest. Therefore a fine tuning strategy has to be developed using the existing scientific and technical capacity monitored by such as the OECD and the resources should be reallocated to that end.**
- **The most critical problem we face with today is the food security of rapidly growing world population. Food supply problems and price volatility have proved how fragile the global food system is in the face of these shifts in demand and supply balance and price fluctuations. It is obvious that the global system is unprepared for such unforeseeable crises.**

- The problems such as low agricultural productivity, high rate of population growth in less developed countries, scarcity of water, more frequent incidences of floods and droughts than normal, insufficient resource allocation for agricultural investments and R&D activities still remain unsolved. We need to develop applicable strategies with the participation of all countries and parties in order to avoid recurrence of similar crises. A new support system to agriculture be developed, since agriculture is more than trade and competition.
- If we want to have world peace, we should first overcome the problem of hunger throughout the world. Otherwise, the world would not be safe with 1 billion hunger and 2 billion undernourished.
- It is impossible to keep food security issue out of politics and political framework. I would like to state explicitly that the problems of hunger, famine and food crisis are not only economic but also a political problem, a humanitarian problem. Since the present situation is not independent from politics, its solution should be produced by politicians in the first place.
- Increases in food prices create an attractive environment for the investments of private sectors in the developed and developing countries. This might be evaluated as an opportunity. However, in order to eliminate the hunger problem in the world, a regular investment of 35 to 40 billion dollars is required in the field of agriculture annually. It is obvious that the countries' resources reserved for investment has decreased following the global financial crisis. Hence, the world will run into great difficulties to overcome the hunger problem, unless the governments and international organizations give particular importance to this matter.
- The fight against hunger will be on the top of the agenda in the next 20 years unless a sustainable solution can be found. Trade liberalization, climate change, growing world population is only a small of part of the challenges in coming years.

## **2. How well prepared is the food and agriculture system, to respond to the needs of a rapidly changing world?**

- Recent food crisis have shown us that food and agriculture system is unprepared both in terms of price increases and climate change. According to the overall picture, developed countries formalize their agricultural policies in compliance with changing conditions in the world. However, it is quite difficult to estimate what reflections these policies will have on the developing countries. **Agriculture is deemed to be a subsistence area in developing countries, and this negatively effects its transformation to an economic sector.** 85% of agricultural holdings in

the world are small scale and subsistence family holdings. Hence, in the agricultural reform studies at global level, this 85% subsistence family holdings should largely be targeted and required measures should be given emphasize to transform them into an economic structure.

### **3. What should the role of governments be in ensuring that the global food and agriculture system is well prepared to address expected opportunities and challenges?**

- The challenges to occur in the field of agriculture for the next period include; mitigation, adaptation, cost for developed and developing countries, climate change, food security, agricultural credit problem, decrease in purchase power of agricultural population, deterioration of free trade understanding in agriculture, speculation risk in agricultural stock exchange, price rise in petroleum, increase in bio-energy production, lack of confidence to agricultural projections.
  
- Each person in the world has the right to access food as well as having the right to access water and air. This is a human right. Therefore, states have the right to implement all necessary agricultural policies to ensure food security of their people. Food security is a task of states. States are responsible to protect their people's right to access adequate food. International agreements in the field of agriculture should be built on this perspective. What governments can do for the next period are;
  - Support to agriculture should be designed to address climate change, environment, food security, food safety issues,
  - Establishment of an international pricing mechanism which could even cover the lowest income level in the world for the products like cereal and animal products from which we largely meet our daily calorie requirement,
  - Not to jeopardize people's right to access food for the sake of free trade in agriculture,
  - To strengthen the planning and auditing role of governments in order to provide adequate food supply and quality,
  - To take required actions to prevent the poor to face with problems after the boom in the food prices,
  - To conclude international agreements (e.g. WTO) with an understanding to improve global trade,
  - To take measure to prevent speculations in agricultural stock exchange,

- To provide much more resource allocation for R&D activities,
- To develop mechanisms to encourage private sector to make more investment in agriculture,

#### **4. What should the contribution of the OECD be in that process?**

- In the recent food crisis we gone through, the estimations of international organizations about agricultural production and prices failed. OECD may produce more accurate estimations with low failure risk by implementing a new modeling.
- Global early warning system may be established in stock exchanges and monitored by reliable organizations (such as WB, IMF, WTO, UN, FAO and OECD). Monitoring harvest, observation of climate in terms of agricultural production in main production regions is important to mitigate possible risks and to take appropriate actions.
- OECD fulfils a substantial task by monitoring and evaluating agricultural policies throughout the world. It is also deemed as a reliable agricultural data base. The efficiency of agricultural policies of different countries may be compared based on these data. We fully support OECD to maintain monitoring the developments in agricultural markets and prices and providing data regularly and under unexpected crisis conditions. Additionally, we want OECD to preserve its position as an international platform where policies and dialogs are carried on by OECD member countries, nonmember countries and international organizations.
- We firmly believe that OECD's persistence to work on solutions for the problems of environment and climate change, since they are closely related to agriculture, would be rather beneficial both for OECD member and nonmember countries.