

Director-General of FAO,
President of IFAD,
Deputy Executive Director of WFP,
Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Rain is good for agriculture. I had hoped, though, that the collective scientific expertise on October 3rd could have prevented it!
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome you on the Day of German Unity, my first since taking office in August
- I feel particularly honored by the presence of both Principals of our Rome Based Agencies, H.E. Dr. Qu Donyu and H.E. Dr. Alvaro Lario
- We all have just spent three days at the G7 Agriculture Ministerial in amazing Siracusa - together with Federal Food and Agriculture Minister Cem Oezdemir
- It evidenced, there is strong momentum for global food security - thanks to the G7 and G20 presidencies. We need to nurture and sustain it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- What do 34 years of German Unity mean to us?
- To commemorate the struggle for freedom by the then Eastern Germans. The external dimension of German unity: Being surrounded by reliable Allies, partners, friends - It was a unique moment in history. An era, many thought would make confrontation and wars a thing of the past.
- The United Nations was the core pillar to welcome and embed the unified Germany.

- In the 51 years of our UN membership, we continue to take responsibility. Jointly with Namibia, we have just successfully co-facilitated the “Pact for the Future”. To make the UN more equitable and fit for a sustainable future.
- In 1973 our solemn moment of becoming members of the General Assembly had actually been preceded in 1946
- by our membership to the Food and Agriculture Organization.
- This underlines both: The vital importance of food and food systems governance for humanity. And the less formalistic, more tangible nature of your work - FAO, WFP, IFAD. And I may add: The courageous, and – shockingly too often in recent months – dangerous mission of WFP’s humanitarian workers.

Your excellencies,

- Regretfully today, confrontation and conflicts are back, leading to polarization also at the Rome-based agencies.
- You all know Germany’s positions on Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the security of Israel, the urgent need for a ceasefire in Gaza and, very imminently with regard to Lebanon, denouncing Iran’s attack and the call for de-escalation to avoid a more devastating regional conflict.
- A clear stance on issues should, however, not cement polarization forever!
- There is work to be done! We continue to help preventing conflict and rebuilding..From Sudan to Haiti or from Ethiopia to Bangladesh.. Germany has throughout remained the no 2 donor worldwide – of ODA and of humanitarian assistance – We have actively influenced the climate debate, were the first to contribute significantly to the loss and damage fund and are a candidate for the Security Council in the 27/28 term.
- We have been fighting for human rights – and very prominently in Rome - for the human right to food.

- I was fortunate enough, exactly 20 years ago, to have negotiated the Right to Food guidelines and later on, as an FAO project manager, helped mainstream them!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Germany has also confronted itself intensely with our colonial past and the crimes committed. Much too late, yet vigorously and visibly. In words and deeds.
- This Day of German Unity reminds us: “How we understand our history also determines our actions in the future”, as Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock recently said. We have to engage in an open exchange with our partners.
- Hence, partnerships and synergies at home and with all RBAs are my top priorities:
 - To continue our work for the Human Right to adequate food, with tangible and innovative projects on the ground
 - To identify more clearly the interfaces of all three RBAs along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.
 - To address climate-food with science and innovation and bring agriculture to the fore in our climate foreign policy
 - To find creative solutions in making international finance, including climate finance, and private sector investment work for rural livelihoods
- To tackle all of this, I am grateful I have a wonderful team of experts at the Permanent Representation - My deputy, Heiner Thofern, brand new but an old FAO hand, together with Ronald Meyer, Alexander Ernst and Marie-Luise Weckerling.
- Let me not shy away from our current domestic and financial situation:
- We are facing strong budget cuts also in our international work. No doubt: This is born out of budgetary necessity and done across

Government. But I am confident we may mobilize additional funding when specific needs arise.

- As to our current political climate in Germany, it is equally polarized. Some political quarters put our international work in doubt.
- This means for me here in Rome: Look for impact, explain more, explain better what we are doing and how this also helps Germans at home. I am deeply convinced that our international efforts are in our own national interest, too.

- Let me conclude, dear Friends

- with a reference to our cultural program tonight: It is a tribute to you , our wonderful host country – and something very personal:

I encouraged “Cantamus Berlin”, one of the finest and most innovative Chambre Choirs in our Capital city, in which I used to sing myself until last July, to come to Rome alongside with the amazing Italo-German Jazz Duo Pippo Miller. They’ll make fine music for us tonight.

- And since I mentioned the budgetary situation: This has only been possible thanks to gracious corporate sponsors as well as the entire embassy and friends, including the Swiss Perm Rep to host the musicians.
- Therefore, a big thank you goes to the huge team behind the team that worked very hard to make this evening possible: Claudia, Andrea, Katharina, Marco, Svenja, Bernadeth and Alexander.
- I wish you a meteorologically dry and wonderful evening!