The future of family farming in Europe in perspective of launching the "UN Decade on Family Farming (2019-2028)"

12 March 2019 - Bucharest, Romania.

Speech of Mariana Șeremet – Grădina Moldovei, Republic of Moldova

My name is Mariana Șeremet, I am a peasant from Cigîrleni village, in Republic of Moldova. Together with my family, I live and work in a small scale traditional peasant farm. I am a seed producer and I work with old varieties of local populations of vegetables, aromatic plants, flowers, using the traditional knowledge but also new peasant innovative practices. I am the president of the organization Grădina Moldovei, which reunites peasants and gardeners from all around Moldova.

I would like to start by saying that everything starts with the process – with the way decisions are made for public policies. For too long, public policies have been made for us, without us. And the results are catastrophic. According to FAO, for the third year in a row, there has been a rise in world hunger. The absolute number of undernourished people - those facing chronic food deprivation - has increased to nearly 821 million in 2017, from around 804 million in 2016. The climate change has become in the last years an alarming concern of the humankind. We need a more inclusive process, where we, the small family farmers can make our voices heard.

For the peasants, small scale and medium family farmers from Europe and Central Asia, the Decade of Family Farming, approved in the UN General Assembly in 2017 by an outstanding majority - including all the countries in our region - is a very important framework. It is a framework that promotes public policies in support family farming, by putting the family farmers at the center of the process. Because small family farmers are important and so far, they have not been receiving the necessary support. As it was highlighted by FAO, small family farmers, including peasants, fisher folks, pastoralists who represent almost half of the world's population, are providing more than 70% of the world food in a sustainable and healthy way. All the efforts made within this Decade, have to put priority on the participation of the small family farmers. We need to take action, together, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to give meaning to this Decade.

We would like to mention 2 very important directions that we believe this Decade needs to take:

- The implementation of the UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and other People working in rural areas – which was successfully approved by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. I am delighted to say that Republic of Moldova, my country, voted in favor of this Declaration. We would like to highlight particularly the rights to natural means of production such as – seeds, land and water and also other fundamental rights: the right to have access to market, social security, decent and dignified work conditions. We believe that the Declaration needs to be the center of work through the Decade and to be used as source of inspiration for national legislative processes.

- Promoting Peasant Agroecology:
  - We see Agroecology as a key form of production for ending hunger and mitigating climate change.
  - We believe that promoting Agroecology and peasants’ rights to use, develop, reproduce and maintain the genetic diversity of local/traditional/indigenous seeds is the way to achieve SDGs, especially Goal 2 (which refers to ‘end of hunger’) through the Decade.
  - We also believe that the Decade’s objectives will never be achieved without ensuring the full respect, protection and fulfillment of women’s rights. In order to do that, we need specific public policies to promote the production and marketing of food by peasant women.
  - A special focus on youth is crucial for the Decade as they are essential not only for the future of food and agriculture but also for today, now. We need our youth to remain in rural areas.
areas, to continue to feed our communities. We don’t want them to be forced to migrate abroad, we don’t want them to take arms in their hands and make war.

At regional level, we are organized in a multistakeholders platform, named Nyeleni Europe and Central Asia, reuniting peasant organizations but also other food producers organizations – fisherfolks, pastoralists, indigenous peoples. We also benefit from the participation of NGOs in the fields of development, human rights and environmental protection, consumers organizations and last but not least researchers, scientists and scholars. Altogether we represent over 400 organizations in over 40 countries in Europe and Central Asia.

We have the necessary experience and determination to engage in this Decade, putting peasants at the center of the process and we are committed to make this Decade for Family Farming a success. Together with FAO, IFAD and our governments we are convinced it will be.