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A training policy for managers and operators for modern, high-quality agriculture in the Mediterranean countries

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President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank CIHEAM for organising this seminar, which can be very useful for the evolution of agriculture in the Mediterranean Basin.

Mr Brahimi's communication has prompted me to change the paper that I had prepared and to discuss his interesting views of north-south relations and their impact in the Mediterranean region.

With his detailed considerations, the UNO representative has brought us face to face with the serious problems of the moment by painting a complex picture of a negative reality, the fruit of unequal conditions and poor relations between the industrialised countries, representing the north, and the third world countries, that is to say the south. The latter countries are all derived in one way or another from a colonial situation, of which they still feel the old constraints.

It seems to me opportune to specify here that the future of the world depends more on north-south than on east-west relations. This is the greatest problem of our time.

The world is already peopled by thousands of millions of people facing serious problems every day, and especially those of food and energy. These are the main points against which we must measure our strength in the search for possible, acceptable solutions for reducing the gap between north and south and for enabling balanced overall development.

It must also be understood that the development of the north can only be pursued with convergent action by the social forces and institutions that will make possible the modernisation of the south. For this reason, we—the agricultural professional organisations—are involved in the search for the most appropriate solutions to enhance collaboration between several countries in order to achieve progress. Within the more limited framework of our responsibility, we propose the major involvement of northern countries in the modernisation of agriculture in southern countries, in particular in the interest of northern countries.

Indeed, it is easy to understand that unless solid conditions for development are created in the Third World countries, there will be no security and the world will be faced with the difficult problems related to migratory movements dictated by despair and which are therefore uncontrollable and negative. The living conditions in the developing countries must be improved so that emigration from the southern countries to the northern countries can be organised in a realistic manner.

My opinion is therefore that recognition of the mutual interests of the north and the south is the first step in improving the situation. Others must then follow:

- ❑ the transfer of resources, a new energy policy, the opening of northern markets not only to commodities but also to manufactured products from the south;
- ❑ the rethinking of human relations and especially those between men and women.

These are therefore organised interventions which should be focused first and foremost on the agricultural sector. This is the point of our meeting this morning, which leads us to reflect on the need and the urgency for preparing agricultural technicians of a decent level who are capable of enhancing the primary sector as a condition for progress. Today, the Mediterranean region is both an interesting market for the future and a dangerously explosive area unless efforts are made rapidly to improve collaboration between the peoples and states of the region.

In order to improve collaboration, we must go beyond the limits of Barcelona and open up new horizons for dialogue on productive diversification to reduce conflicts and enhance collaboration.

Fields of action must be chosen that lead to positive results. One of the fields considered in priority is that of agriculture. This is why we ask once again for the rapid organisation of a Mediterranean conference prepared by the European Union to discuss the problem, with the participation not only of the representatives of institutions but also of representatives of the professional, economic and social forces. We consider that it is useful to start with agriculture.

I am talking as the President of the Mediterranean Committee of IFAP. I should like to put forward several general considerations.

I – The situation in agriculture

Agriculture is going through a transition phase. Indeed, one can observe in all the countries in the world a change from 'protection' to 'competition'. As a result, as much action as possible should be taken to enhance collaboration rather than competition of the conflict type between farming in different parts of the world. In fact, collaboration is precisely the key factor that is enabling agriculture in each country to build a future based on development and progress in order to ensure decent incomes for farmers.

Traditional forms of crop and animal farming have changed. Farmers everywhere must face modernity, implying that it is always necessary to allow for the fact the situation changes in a country because of changes that occur elsewhere. This is why it is essential to use—according to the various conditions and situations—scientific and technical discoveries, including those of chemistry—that are decisive for the development of modern crop and animal farming. This shows the importance of the training of managers for agriculture.

II – Farmers' involvement

In contrast with the opinion held by some, farmers have generally shown that they have sufficient capability and can respond to these new data. Indeed, production is increasing everywhere and the quality of produce is improving, although there are still vast zones of under-development and of poverty, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The presence, strength and role of professional organisations should be enhanced in every country in order to achieve progress in farming and in farmers' situations. They must be independent of political parties and governments so that they can perform their functions effectively, but institutions and other organised social forces must recognise their role.

It is not always easy to modernise agriculture. It is mainly for this reason that the Mediterranean committee of IFAP is fighting—directly and by inviting its member organisations to do the same—to encourage national and international institutions to show greater concern for agricultural problems. In the face of the new requirements emerging in rural areas in favour of progress, it is important that institutions should be attentive and ready to act in consequence. This point is determinant in developing countries where living conditions are more difficult and where farmers' incomes are low.

III – Lack of consideration of the role of agriculture

In reality, in almost all the countries in the world, the institutions do not award to agriculture attention suited to the essential role that it plays. It is appropriate to stress that such an attitude is also found in numerous developed western countries. Agriculture is often considered as a marginal sector; in addition, the disagreements that frequently occur in the sector mean that it cannot assert itself effectively. Moreover, farmers do not have the same means of exerting pressure as those used by operators in other economic sectors.

This is why the IFAP Mediterranean Committee must make even greater efforts today to encourage unity among its member organisations, centred not only on reciprocal economic agreements but also on the value of agriculture in the economy and in society, on its territorial, social and production level rebalancing function and on its irreplaceable role in life.

A priority task for an international organisation such as the Mediterranean Committee of IFAP consists more than ever of drawing the attention of international and national institutions to these themes and of developing guidelines for the development of modern agriculture. One cannot repeat this obvious truism often enough: all life is impossible without agriculture.

IV – Large changes at the world scale

Today, a phase of great political, institutional, economic and social changes is in progress at the world scale. Deep changes are under way mainly in the political and economic relations between peoples and states. It is our duty to ensure that agriculture is considered as what it is, that is to say the primary sector than can and must make a capital contribution to strengthening collaboration between peoples and states.

In other words, the central question raised with regard to the action of the IFAP Mediterranean Committee is very simple. *What kind of agriculture for what kind of society?* The answer to the question is just as obvious. It is necessary to aim at high quality agriculture in a society in perfect harmony. As a result, it is necessary to fight to establish a proper balance between town and country, between agriculture and industry and between inland regions and coastal regions. The first question to be settled is therefore the drawing up of proposals making it possible to affirm the rights of agriculture and then ensure that farmers can perform their crop and animal farming activity using the methods of modern enterprises and without being considered as enemies of the environment and destroyers of territories.

V – The orientation and co-ordination role of the IFAP Mediterranean Committee

The IFAP Mediterranean Committee must make the best possible use all of the tools at its disposal and of its presence, albeit consultative, at UNO in order to put agriculture in the forefront. This is the most effective way of protecting land and conserving the environment.

It must also be remembered that conservation of the environment and land can be performed by helping farmers to make balanced use of modern scientific and technical resources aimed at reducing fatigue, providing sufficient production to cover human food requirements, ensuring sufficient income for farmers and all the other elements essential to modern life, with energy requirements heading the list.

In other words, the Mediterranean Committee of IFAP should play a more concrete role of orientation and co-ordination to promote the development of a new reality in rural areas, based on the unity of the agricultural world. However, such unity can only be developed if differences are respected. Indeed, the unity of the agricultural world can enhance collaboration and friendship between peoples and friendship then makes it possible to change the world in a climate of freedom and peace.

Please allow me to remind you that the 3rd Mediterranean Agricultural Forum was held in Cyprus last week, organised by the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in co-operation with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) .

The main theme of the 3rd Forum was 'the use of water in agriculture'. The participants discussed the problems and challenges raised by the shortage of water in the Mediterranean basin and its very serious consequences for agriculture, especially in the countries in which this sector still forms a large proportion of production, of national wealth and employment.

The Forum examined the situation in several countries with regard to both water resources and their use in agriculture and irrigation systems and national legislation on the subject. Stress was laid on the urgent need for rational, sustainable water resources with guaranteed renewal and supply without endangering the economic sectors that depend on them.

An essential natural resource such as water, whose exploitation is maximum in the Mediterranean countries, must absolutely be conserved in the light of the foreseeable increasing needs in the near future. Population growth around the Mediterranean basin, water supplies for the population and the development of agriculture require urgent measures to reduce wastage of water, to enhance more rational water consumption and to introduce new agricultural techniques that are less dependent on water. The Forum expressed the wish that a single water authority should be set up in each country which, in collaboration with the World Water Council, could contribute to attaining more easily all the objectives mentioned in the debates.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this seminar on *Advanced Training of Agricultural and Food Managers of the Mediterranean Area* held by CIHEAM does meet our requirements. Indeed, the aim is that of helping political decision makers, employers and teachers to consider together the future strategies to be set up so that the Mediterranean basin will have high quality professional training systems suited to the real needs of the agricultural sector. In particular, new communication technology must be incorporated in the dispensing of knowledge and co-operation should be enhanced between academics and the professional world.

We—the professional organisations—award much importance to the success of this seminar that should lead CIHEAM to be more innovative in its approach to the training of managers in the Mediterranean basin. We strongly hope to be able to count on your broad experience and your knowledge of the needs of the whole of the region in terms of employment and to enhance the progress of agriculture, which represents everybody's well-being.

