

OPENING ADDRESS BY A. GAVRIELIDES  
Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cyprus

Mr. President  
of the International Scientific Center of Fertilizers  
Distinguished Guests,  
Dear Delegates,

I convey to you the best personal greetings of H.E. the President of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. George Vassiliou who has also instructed me to express to you his wishes for the success of the Congress.

It is my privilege and pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all of you, on behalf of the Government and people of Cyprus and myself, to this highly significant Tenth World Fertilizer Congress. As you know, the Congress is jointly organized by the International Scientific Center of Fertilizers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, through its Agricultural Research Institute. We are, indeed, particularly honored to host this significant international event, and I wholeheartedly accepted the invitation to address the Congress.

Mr. President,

The goals of increasing food production and improving its distribution and quality whilst simultaneously protecting the environment and restoring the renewable resources of our planet, which are rapidly depleted, are at the forefront of contemporary thinking. Awareness and concern on such issues, characterize the policies and programmes of international agencies which were, traditionally, primarily involved with food production, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Council. The Council of Europe, the Commission of the European Communities and other regional groups, as well as national Governments are now voicing their concern and rising up to the challenges of our time. You are all cognizant of the fact that the previous decade was a "Lost Decade" for many developing nations. Considerable numbers of their people continue to suffer from appalling living conditions: poverty, hunger and malnutrition are problems far from being resolved. 20 million people die every year from hunger-associated causes.

It is, indeed, a paradox, that the "silent" crisis of hunger and malnutrition mostly afflicts those that produce the food: the population of the rural areas. Children, in particular, greatly suffer from these conditions, a situation which does not confer pride to the international community. It is estimated that, in developing nations, the number of children below the age of 5 who are undernourished exceeds 160 million.