



# 38TH ANNUAL MEETING

## FOOD CRISIS PREVENTION NETWORK

### OPENING REMARKS



Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki  
Honorary President  
Sahel and West Africa Club

Your Excellency the President of the Togolese Republic  
Distinguished Ministers  
Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors  
Presidents of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions  
Mr. Executive Secretary of CILSS  
Ladies and Gentlemen, High representatives of technical and financial partners  
Ladies and Gentlemen, representatives of civil society, customary and religious authorities  
Dear members of the RPCA  
Honourable guests

Allow me to express my deepest gratitude to H.E M. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic, for hosting the 38th Annual Meeting of the RPCA. I salute his leadership and personal commitment to the food cause, as evidenced by his presence among us. This deserves recognition and acclamation! I also express my appreciation to their Excellencies Touray and Diop, Presidents of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, to Mr. Laoukein Kourayo, Minister Coordinator of CILSS, agropastoral and private sector organisations, as well as technical and financial partners for their unflinching commitment to eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the region.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished guests,**

In 2020 we were talking about an unprecedented food crisis when the region totalled some 20 million people in need of emergency assistance. In the space of two years, this figure has almost doubled. These findings are terrible, I would even say shocking. What words will we have to use in a few years if the trend continues? Where are we heading?

What I believe is that if we are not careful, if we do not manage - collectively - to implement appropriate structural responses, the food issue risks becoming a major factor of «**destabilisation**» of our societies. Already the words «*hunger, high cost of living, poverty*» punctuate social demands in several countries. *A hungry person with no income prospects is in danger. He is also a potential danger, because he is ready to try anything for his survival, including violence.* We all know this.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear participants,**

In creating the RPCA, the ambition of the region's political decision-makers and their partners was to better prevent food crises, rather than simply manage emergencies. **I want to say here that we have made undeniable progress;** progress that many regions of the world would envy. However, I must also say that **this progress is too slow.** We know that the issue of food and nutrition is a long distance race, and not a speed race; but what the increasingly worrying figures tell us is that we must move up a gear or risk being definitively overwhelmed by the scale of the problems.

The fact is that today, we are still insufficiently equipped and insufficiently coordinated in the face of increasingly complex crises, and in the face of which the public authorities seem disoriented. So disoriented that we are witnessing the return of **«inward-looking»** reflexes. As I speak, no less than 1.3 million head of transhuman livestock are blocked in cross-border areas due to security measures. Not to mention the restrictive measures taken by some countries to export food products. We know that isolation is not the solution to food and nutritional insecurity. We know that the crises - food, health, security, economic - are regional in nature; and that consequently the solutions are also regional in nature. Regional solidarity is not an ideological posture, it is an existential necessity that must not be questioned in any way.

**Ladies and Gentlemen  
Distinguished guests**

All the countries of the region are aware of the need to invest in the future, to innovate so that the food chains of tomorrow respond effectively to the challenges. The industrial platform of Adétikopé is an example that I must commend. Inaugurated in 2021 by President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, this platform is part of a systemic ambition to create added value from Togo's natural resources. In other countries, agro-industrial parks, agropoles or special economic zones are also flourishing or being planned. These zones become instruments of development when they are part of inclusive economic policies.

This momentum must be encouraged. However, the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives would be further enhanced if a number of considerations were taken into account. I will mention just three.

**The first** is the recognition of the growing complexity of the food equation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution; this fact must permeate the decision-making forums of the region and its partners. To be effective, our policies and actions must provide holistic, multifaceted responses. This will require a significant improvement in our capacity to analyse data.

**The second** is that sustainable solutions to the challenge of increasing crises and turbulence will require the region's ability to optimize and make the most of the food interdependencies between countries. Do we have the necessary internal political resources to create this community of mutual interests and this intelligent solidarity based on the comparative advantages of each? I am firmly convinced that this is the way to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.

**Finally, the third** consideration is that the solution to the food problem lies in the long term. From now on, we must place our ambitions, political and financial commitments within the framework of **«Generational Contracts»**, at least 20-30 years - well beyond electoral mandates. Both the States of the region and their partners must now re-format their policy-making moulds and their intervention instruments in this sense, if we hope to win the challenge of sustainable food and nutritional security for all.

**Ladies and Gentlemen  
Honourable guests**

To conclude my remarks, I would simply like to remind you that the **«impatience and anger of the hungry»** are growing, with all the social, economic, and political implications that this represents for the region. We must prioritise **ACTION** now, rather than talk. This is the meaning of the appeal we collectively made during the high-level consultation last April between the region's political actors and their international partners - for which I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere gratitude, in particular to the EU and the USA.

I wish a successful outcome to the 38th Annual Meeting of the RPCA. I thank you for your attention.

