Food safety, a shared responsibility
UNIDO’s role and its partnership with CFDA

SPEECH BY

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At the

Vienna Food Safety Forum

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Your Excellency Mr. BI Jingquan, Minister of the China Food and Drug Administration,

Your Excellency Mr. CHENG Jingye, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of P. R. China to the United Nations,

Mr. Cenk Gurol, Chairman, Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI),

Distinguished colleagues and representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Bank,

Distinguished representatives of international regulatory bodies and delegates from private sector associations and companies,

Dear Panelists,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to welcome you all at this 2015 Vienna Food Safety Forum and to have my organization, UNIDO, co-organizing this important event in partnership with CFDA, the Chinese Food and Drug Administration.

Food safety is a global public good: It is fundamental to the health and well-being of individuals and families, and to the public health of nations.
Check against delivery

It is also necessary to enable trade in food products among economies - trade which results in greater prosperity for all regions of the world.

With food supply chains stretching around the world, food safety issues have an impact on developing and developed countries alike. The complexity and the magnitude of global food safety issues have made all of us recognize that overcoming these issues requires a multi-player response including governments, the business sector, international organizations and the civil society. Food safety also has a strong impact on inclusive and sustainable development and has a particular contribution to make to the Sustainable Development Goals that the UN and the International Community will officially endorse this month during the 70th General Assembly Proceedings.

It is for all these reasons that I have decided to hold the Vienna Food Safety Forum. I want this forum to be a convening platform for the exchange of global best practices, experiences, and local expertise along the full value chain of industrial development. The Vienna Food Safety Forum is meant to convene a diversity of actors for knowledge sharing and mutual learning.
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNIDO is organizing this first Vienna Food Safety Forum in partnership with the Chinese Food and Drug Administration. This has a reason: China’s experiences exemplify the complexity of food safety challenges and a successful, proactive approach by authorities and the private sector to address the critical issues of human health through an integrated approach of improved production systems. China’s government has implemented major measures, such as strengthening supervision, law enforcement, improvement of food safety standards, and public awareness-raising. The creation of CFDA as a unified single agency to oversee the Food Safety national framework is a key milestone. As co-organizer of this Forum, CFDA will share with all of us some of its experiences and lessons learned on both food safety related challenges and ways to overcome them.

UNIDO and CFDA are not only partnering for this Forum but also launching a technical cooperation project to further strengthen CFDA’s technical capacities. Our two organizations have just exchanged the signed project document.

UNIDO has a long track record in food safety related capacity-building along the entire food processing value chain. We assist agro-processors to upgrade their processes to meet relevant food safety standards.
We also support the strengthening of the national quality infrastructure, such as standards bodies, regulatory authorities and conformity assessment services. Testing, inspection or certification services are needed to verify that products are safe for human consumption.

At the country and regional level, UNIDO has supported countries such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan to overcome export bans for their food products in the European Union, the United States and other regulated markets.

At global level, UNIDO has been actively involved as a member and key partner of the Global Food Safety Initiative’s (GFSI) food safety capacity building programme. Projects have been implemented over the past six years in countries such as Egypt, India, Malaysia and Ukraine, in partnership with a number of GFSI private sector company members such as Metro, AEON and Pick N Pay.

Furthermore, UNIDO is an active partner to the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) since its inception. The Organization is working closely with the World Bank (WB) and GFSP partners such as Mars Incorporated, Waters, Food Industry Asia (FIA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to advance food safety collaboration. Earlier, in June this year, UNIDO and the World Bank co-organized the strategy retreat of the GFSP in UNIDO HQs to define the 5-years strategy of the GFSP with the active participation of all the partners.
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To overcome global food safety challenges, we will need to bring together the public and private sector, academia and international organizations to deliver global solutions. An adequate response will require us to use the different strengths and expertise of each partner: from applying various instruments in regulation and research to better education and the use of improved technology. I am most satisfied to see the high-level participation of regulatory bodies, important private sector players, international agencies and development partners in this forum. Your expertise and intent to share good practices will make this event a milestone in international cooperation on food safety.

I wish to thank CFDA for their co-organization and partnering with UNIDO to this first Vienna Food Safety Forum. This is a clear recognition of CFDA’s commitment towards convening a global platform on “Food Safety”. UNIDO is proud to be a partner in this process – a step which will provide direction in our common endeavor to establish appropriate food safety measures.
I wish to thank the Austrian authorities and private sector representatives for their participation in the Forum and their sharing of expertise and knowledge on food safety management in general and on dairy products in particular.

Further, I wish to thank all international and national partners and participants to make this a truly global event on food safety and its concrete application in different sectors.

In conclusion, I wish you all a fruitful debate and discussion at the different sessions. Allow me to close with a quote from our Secretary General, Mr. Bank Ki-moon made during the recent celebration of the 2015 World Health Day:

“We all have a role to play in keeping food safe – from farm to plate and everywhere in between.”

Thank you.