Statement delivered by Mr Serge Nakouzi
FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran
and to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
“Pesticide Specifications Training”
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Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here today at the opening of the training workshop on Pesticide Specifications and to welcome you on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

I would like to convey my appreciation to the Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this training workshop. My sincere gratitude also goes to the Plant Protection Organization for the time and effort they deployed for the preparation of the workshop.

Use of pesticides as an agriculture input is required for preventing damages to crops from pests and increasing productivity. However, the issue of pesticide quality is of the utmost importance today for farmers and the consumers alike, as well as for the sustainable development of the agriculture sector and for the protection of human health.

As worldwide use of pesticide continues to increase, it is accompanied by a growth in adverse consequences for both human health and environmental safety. The sub-standard and fake pesticide products are serious problems in increasing the risk to human health and the environment. Poor quality pesticides are not only unlikely to serve the intended purpose, but they also provide poor value to users.

According to FAO’s estimation, approximately 30% of the pesticide market in developing countries does not meet the standards set and does not conform to the specifications promulgated by FAO and WHO. Non-compliance of pesticide products has constantly been evidenced in the market of industrialized countries, as depicted in the annual
national reports of official quality control laboratories in those countries. These sub-standard pesticides result in enormous financial losses and detrimental effects for users in terms of efficacy and the environment.

Developing international methods and standards is an important process leading to harmonized definitions, unified requirements and procedures that can also be used for regulatory purposes. The FAO/WHO specifications intend to reinforce quality assurance and advocate effective risk management, they contribute thus to enhancing food safety by helping to prevent crops from the damages caused by pests.

Since 1963, FAO has significantly contributed to the promotion of pesticide quality and facilitation of pesticide international trade. There have been more than 400 specifications established so far and the FAO/WHO procedure for equivalence determination has been adopted in many countries. With the increase of international trade and enhancement of awareness in food safety and protection of human health and environment, more FAO/WHO specifications are expected by government authorities, in particular by developing and importing countries.

Today, pesticides quality control is of growing importance to governments. The International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management requests the member countries to possess or have access to facilities to verify and apply control over the quality of pesticides for use and sale or export in compliance with the relevant FAO/WHO specifications. Governments are also requested to follow the principles on development of FAO/WHO Specifications and to use FAO/WHO procedures for determining equivalence of pesticides. These specifications are designed to provide an international point of reference against which products can be judged, either for regulatory purposes or in commercial dealings, and thus help to prevent the trading of inferior products. They define the essential chemical and physical properties that may be linked to the efficacy and safe use of a product. However, developing countries sometimes face difficulties in coping with this commitment, mainly because of lack of resources.
This joint meeting is an evidence of the importance being attributed by the Islamic Republic of Iran to improve food safety and agricultural development. Today, I am pleased to see many participants sitting in this meeting room. This is a good opportunity to share information about international standards on pesticides quality, in particular the FAO/WHO specifications for improving the pesticide quality control, and thereby, contributing to food security, food safety and to the sustainable agricultural development in Iran. The Fifth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran has very clear provision on setting the ground for optimum use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The main orientations defined in the Plan include development of national standards for plant protection through incorporating international standards, providing assistance for protection of the environment.

Improving pesticide quality and strengthening effective pest control means and measures, while ensuring environmental and human safety, are the objectives of our work. FAO is highly supportive of the activities in improving the establishment and application of international standards for pesticide quality and will continue to provide the support necessary in this regard. The Organization will continue to take further actions to improve the development and implementation of FAO/WHO specifications and adopt procedures for determining equivalence at national, regional and international levels, thereby fulfilling the goal of ensuring food security and improving consumer protection, and also facilitating trade and agricultural development.

With this, I would like to close my welcoming remarks and I wish all of you a successful training workshop.

Thank you.