



GRADUATION ADDRESS

by

Hiroyuki Konuma

FAO Assistant Director General and
Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

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Professor Dr. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai, President of AIT,

Honourable Chairman of the AIT Board,

Honourable Ambassadors and Representatives from Embassies and AIT member countries,

AIT Vice president, Professors, Distinguished Guests,

Graduating Students, their families and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for inviting me to this most important ceremony of AIT and allow me to deliver a congratulatory message to AIT graduating students.

I wish to begin with an expression of my heartfelt congratulations to each of graduating student for the successful accomplishment of study with a dedication and tireless efforts, which led to the recognition of the degree and graduation. I am aware that it is not such an easy task to complete studies and prepare thesis at an acceptable standard within a limited time available. Please accept congratulations once again. I also wish to congratulate concerned professors for their achievement and efforts. I still remember my time at the university and how difficult studies were. But my most of unforgettable memories still fresh after 40 years are the smile of friends and enjoyable

time spent together. University is such a place where you can learn many things outside of class rooms, and build up your human face and life- long friendships.

Dear graduating students,

While world economy has advanced, and we live in a modern world and benefited from advanced technology, we need to realize that the world has a huge social divide and uncertainties.

Asia and the Pacific Region has been a prime mover of economic growth in recent decades with the highest average GDP annual growth (often 6-8 percent) among all regions. On the other hand, this is resulted in the widening of income inequality and social inequity between the rich and those who are at the bottom of society and left behind of the benefit of economic growth. Indeed, GDP figures indicate the average, but it shadows those who are not benefitted from the growth. Often policies are formulated in favor of rapid economic growth without taking sufficient consideration of social and environmental implications. While promoting economic growth, in parallel, we must target our support to these most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society through community based support, social protection measures, right based approaches, capacity building and other means, and move forward for eradicating poverty and achieving zero hunger, which are exactly in line with the Post 2015 Agenda-Sustainable Development Goals.

Next example is a double burden of malnutrition. At present, the world produces sufficient food to meet the need of everyone. Yet, the world is still a home of 805 million chronically hungry people and the vast majority of them live in developing countries. One in every nine people on the planet suffers from chronic hunger, and one in every four children in developing world is stunted. On the other hand, 2.1 billion people (2.5 time higher than chronic hunger population) are suffering from over- weight and obesity. Can you imagine what is happening on our planet? Indeed, problem of food security is not the production, but largely due to access and distribution of food. Those who are rich and have enough money would enjoy with plenty of food and eat more than what they physically require and get health problems, while those poor continue to suffer from chronic hunger which is affecting their health as well. Why we can't help each other? I hope you will be the one to initiate a concrete step of action to narrow the gap. A the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) held on 20 November this year, Pope Francis expressed his disappointment on this fact by calling the world "full of individualism" and "lack of solidarity".

Let's look at post-harvest loss and food waste issues. You will be surprised that every year, nearly 30 percent of food produced on the planet were either lost or wasted. About 45 percent of fresh vegetables and fruits were lost or wasted during the supply chain. Furthermore, nearly 25 percent, 20 percent and 15 percent of food cooked and served to consumers were wasted without consumption in USA, Europe and industrialised Asia, respectively. Again, this is happened as oppose to the existence of 805 million chronic hunger people who require more food. This is not just a waste of

frits or vegetable itself, but it implies the waste of fertilizer, water, seeds, labour, fuel for transport, processing and packaging and others. Each of us can contribute in reducing the food losses and waste, irrespective of age and gender. Let's demonstrate ourselves and advocate to our family members and friends starting from our daily meals.

Lastly, I wish to speak about our future. Indeed, the world is facing serious challenges in future food security. Present world population of 7.1 billion is predicted to exceed 9 billion by 2050, and the per capita average food consumption would exceed 3,000 kcal/day in 2050 from 2,770 kcal/day in 2005/07. To meet the rapidly increasing food requirements, the world food production needs to be increased by 60 percent worldwide or 77 percent increase in developing countries alone (where nearly 98 percent of population increase would occur) by 2050. If we fail to achieve this target, there would be a high risk of food shortage, food riots, social and political unrest, civil war and other negative consequences as we witnessed during the food price crisis in 2007-08. But from where this production increase should come from? Do we have enough agricultural lands and water to expand food production? Indeed, there is a very little potential to increase arable lands as agricultural lands have been almost fully exploited. Increasing scarcity of water resources where water is most needed, frequent occurrence of natural disasters, high post-harvest losses and food waste, increasing competition on the use of land and water between food crops and bio-energy crops, negative impacts of climate changes are other critical challenges and uncertainties which would greatly influence future food availability and food security. Indeed, negative impact of climate changes is yet very unpredictable. I personally feel that the future food security would be in a great risk, if present pace of impact of climate change continues. Nevertheless, FAO estimates that it would be possible to increase food production by 60 percent by 2050 on the assumption that nearly 90 percent of food production increase should come from existing arable lands by yield increase and varietal improvement through agricultural research.

This means that the agricultural research will play a key role in achieving food security and feeding the future world, and maintain world peace, stability and sustainable development. The young researchers like you will have an extremely important role to play to support all of us and our future generations to come. Indeed , our future is on your shoulder.

Before closing my speech, I wish to congratulate each of you once again. I wish you to be proud of a graduate of AIT which has a long history in serving as a centre of excellence, contributed to Asia's sustainable development, and holds highly qualified professors and lecturers. And please do not forget about the world, and you are a part of it. We are inter-dependent each other, we can't exist alone, and therefore have to help each other. If we do not help those suffering from poverty and hunger, they would be pushed into a corner with little choices, either die or commit a crime, or fight or become a terrorist, and at an end, it will become our own problem. Think globally and think those who are most vulnerable and disadvantage in our society, and let's build up an society which helps each other.

You are the future leaders in our global society.

Once again, congratulations.

Thank you.