Karibu Kenya!

Rich cultural and natural experiences our vibrant country has to offer. Nairobi be not only productive but also enjoyable as you partake in the session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. May your stay in Kenya be against the backdrop of a bustling city.

National Park, where you can witness the breathtaking beauty of wildlife our city has to offer. Kenya takes pride in being home to Nairobi National Park, a member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission since 1969, Kenya chairs and co-chairs several Working Groups in the Food Hygiene sector. Under livestock, prioritized value chains include dairy, meat and leather while under crops the focus is on cereal, oil crops and fiber crops. In the year 2023, meat exports grew by 8.6% which was attributed to Kenya’s compliance to international food standards. It is envisaged under the BETA agenda; national milk production will be doubled from the current 5.1 billion liters to 10.2 billion liters by the year 2027. This will not only be achieved through increased production but also through better compliance to hygienic practices during handling, processing and distribution along the dairy value chain.

The development and adoption of various Codex standards and the strengthening of food safety infrastructure in the county continue to play a critical role in ensuring safe quality food is available for local, regional and international markets.

As we convene for the 54th session of CCFH, key areas for discussion will include: food hygiene control measures in traditional markets, safety in use and reuse of water in food production, and control of microbial contamination of raw beef, fresh leafy vegetables, raw milk and cheese by Shiga-toxin producing Escherichia coli. The outcomes of these discussions will further enhance safety standards during food production and handling, thereby bolstering the competitiveness of locally produced agricultural products in global markets.

I commend the efforts of the FAO and WHO through the Codex Alimentarius Commission in advancing food safety initiatives. I trust that the delegates will fulfill the objectives set forth for this meeting while also taking the opportunity to explore the beauty of our country. The Ministry pledges its full support towards implementing the outcomes of this meeting for the benefit of our nation and the global community as a whole.
The 54th session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene will be held in Nairobi on 11–15 March. Codex is the multilateral UN body that develops food safety and quality standards. Once adopted by its 188 member countries, Codex standards can be used to assure consumer health protection and to promote fair practices in trade. The food hygiene committee celebrates its 60th year as one of the oldest committees in the Codex system and is responsible for developing standards, guidelines and codes of practice relating to bacteria and viruses in food.

The meeting has a full agenda, with discussions to develop standards relating to bacterial and viral hazards in food. The committee will also look to finalise guidelines on food hygiene in traditional markets, and safe seafood production, among others. If the CCFH will meet in Africa. This year’s full agenda expects to see progress on critical topics like guidelines related to safe use and reuse of water, microbiological control in foods, food hygiene in traditional markets, and regulations that will be developed to ensure that traditional food markets for food are designed and managed effectively to promote food safety.

Dr. Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary for Food Safety, United States of America for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets. The committee will discuss the Proposed draft Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets. These guidelines when adopted will inform policies and regulations that will be developed to ensure that traditional markets for food are designed and managed effectively to promote food safety.

Despite progress, food-borne illnesses, particularly from animal-derived products, continue to pose significant challenges in many countries, exacerbated by the predominance of informal food sectors with inadequate hygiene controls and often supply approximately 80% of the domestic markets. I am glad to note that during the 54th session the committee will discuss the Proposed draft Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets. These guidelines when adopted will inform policies and regulations that will be developed to ensure that traditional markets for food are designed and managed effectively to promote food safety.

By embracing Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice, we aim to safeguard consumer health, bolster domestic food production, and enhance our export capabilities.

The Government of Kenya is committed to supporting the work of Codex and thank the Government of the United States of America for accepting to co-host the important Codex Committee. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the CCFH 54 national multiagency steering committee, the USA Codex office and the Codex secretariat in Rome for their tireless efforts in planning and coordinating this event.

I wish all delegates productive and engaging discussions as we work together towards ensuring food safety and security for all.

MESSAGE FROM STEVE WEARNE CHAIR-CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Dr. José Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary for Food Safety, United States of America

From 11 – 15 March, over 100 countries and International Organizations will convene in Nairobi for 54th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)—one of the oldest subsidiary bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)—to make progress on vital work to keep food safe. The CCFH is one of Codex’s oldest and most prominent subsidiary bodies and is responsible for agreeing and drafting the basic provisions on food hygiene that are a mainstay of Codex. Codex, established in 1963, is the joint international food standards program of the UN FAO and WHO that develops international food safety standards aimed at protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

CCFH serves the international community and you at home. This year the CCFH, which usually meets in the United States, is co-hosted with Kenya and will see over 200 officials and subject matter experts from countries all around the world gather in Nairobi for the official meetings. This is the second time in its history that the CCFH will meet in Africa. This year’s full agenda expects to see progress on critical topics like guidelines related to safe use and reuse of water, microbiological control in foods, food hygiene in traditional markets, and safe seafood production, among others. If the Committee completes its objectives, CCFH will be able to consider new work, such as guidelines related to the control of certain viruses and bacteria in food, to continue to meet the world’s everlasting need for hygienic and safe food.

Legacy and new leadership will center at this year’s CCFH. Dr. Emilio Esteban, the long-standing Chairperson of CCFH has been appointed as the new United States Under Secretary for Food Safety. Dr. Esteban will make opening remarks on Monday as he officially passes the baton to the newly selected Chairperson, Dr. Evelyne Mbandi. Dr. Mbandi is an expert in international food safety systems and microbiology, and will bring her extensive experience in technical fora like the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) and in-depth knowledge of food hygiene to her leadership of the CCFH. Dr. Mbandi will look to keep up the momentum of the CCFH garnered by Dr. Esteban and hopes that the Committee will finalize several important work items this week.

Kenya and the United States are excited to see this strong collaboration over the past 18 months come to fruition as CCFH54 kicks off.