

**Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Deputy Permanent  
Representative, at the global launch of the International Year of Quinoa-  
2013, 20 February 2013, UN General Assembly**

**Mr. President,  
Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Excellencies and distinguished delegates.**

India is privileged to be participating in this global launch of the International Year of Quinoa 2013.

We are equally privileged and honoured by the presence amongst us of H.E. Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of Bolivia, who has been the guiding spirit behind this initiative.

We also deeply value the presence of H.E Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru, H.E. Rafael Orbegoso Foreign Minister of Peru, H.E. Ms Silvana Vallejo, Vice Minister of Rural Development of Ecuador and H.E. Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

The distinguished gathering here today is testimony to the global recognition of Quinoa, its growing popularity across continents, and its potential and possibilities for the future.

**Mr. President,**

In 2011, this august Assembly adopted a resolution to celebrate 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa. My delegation lent its full support to this initiative. And today, as we gather here to celebrate *Quinoa “the golden grain of the Andes”*, let us remind ourselves of its unique qualities, as a food source, as a cultural value and as a versatile agricultural practice .

In today’s climate-vulnerable world, where we are constantly challenged by our quest for food security, quinoa offers a sustainable, healthy and nutritive dietary option.

It is the only plant food that contains all essential amino acids, vitamins and trace elements, and at the same time is gluten free. Its exceptionally high amino acid content enriches it with unique therapeutic properties, qualities that make it a superior nutritional option over other grains that form part of our daily food habit.

As a rich source of protein, it holds immense nutritional and health value for populations in developing countries, especially those who depend on legumes for their daily protein intake. And with more than a billion people worldwide suffering from

malnutrition, almost all in developing countries, what more affordable way can we have than to promote protein and vitamin rich Quinoa to tackle the challenge.

**Mr. President,**

Quinoa is a highly adaptive crop which can grow in variable agro-climatic zones. In its home in the Andean region, there are more than 3000 genetically diverse varieties of Quinoa grown in the coast, in the alluvial plains, in the valleys and in the higher reaches of the mountains.

Today, Quinoa's agronomic versatility has allowed it to travel far and wide. Farms in Asia, Europe and Africa are experimenting with Quinoa production, and these efforts have met with appreciable success.

In my own country, Quinoa cultivation is under trial in the Himalayan region and in the plains of North India. AMARANTH, a crop also native to the Americas with similar properties as the Quinoa, which grows widely in India, makes the trials more than promising.

With low input cost, Quinoa production is highly cost effective. As such its potential to tackle hunger, disease and poverty and to meet the Millennium Development Goals in an affordable manner is truly immense. We look forward to the initiatives of the FAO to promote and popularize quinoa, especially in those parts of the world, where we are still a long way behind in providing the basic needs of people.

Given its environmental adaptability, and our need to identify crops that can best adjust to Climate Change impacts, Quinoa offers several possibilities for adaptation strategies, and can contribute to food and nutrition security in both developed and developing countries.

We must bring greater use of science and technology to promote and propagate Quinoa, and at the same time be willing to share its fruits for greater public good. We fully appreciate the work being done by the FAO on this score and pledge India's committed support to its initiatives.

**Mr. President,**

Feeding our people and providing them with sustenance is a challenge that we, in developing countries, grapple with daily.

My Government's commitment to providing food security to every citizen of India remains resolute and unflinching. We are in the process of considering a food security bill that would guarantee subsidized grains to more than 600 million people in India, with special provisions for women and children.

To many of us here, the success of Quinoa symbolizes our collective hope that we pin in sustainably harnessing our biodiversity resources for meeting the needs of our present and future generations. It equally reinforces our faith in traditional knowledge and practices, as we look around our daily lives for sustainable solutions.

In October last year, India successfully hosted the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. At the meeting, we pledged to delve deep into our forests and our wild fields and in our countless but constrained biotic species to find new solutions for food security and sustaining livelihoods. We hope our efforts to promote Quinoa will go a long way in this common endeavour.

**Mr. President,**

Quinoa is more than a crop. It represents the celebrated spirit of the Andean civilizations and its proud people, people who have preserved their traditional knowledge and practices and taught us to how to live in harmony with nature.

For centuries and over countless generations, they have preserved their wisdom and bequeathed to us their richness, colour and diversity of life. In today's world, as we strive to balance growth with social equity and environmental sustainability, they are our guiding lights.

President Morales, the Andes, the Andean people and the indigenous civilizations of the New World hold special place in our hearts in India. Over centuries of intermingling, our two lands have exchanged ideas, values, flora and fauna. While you added potato, tomato, maize, papaya and more to our cuisine, we gave you coconut, sugarcane and mango. And now you give us and the world quinoa !

**Mr. President,**

We deeply appreciate and support the plans drawn by FAO to promote Quinoa as part of the International Year programme, and hope these efforts would continue much beyond. We wish President Morales and Madam Nadine Heredia every success as Special Ambassadors to FAO for the International Year of Quinoa, as they take this initiative forward.

India remains committed to working with the global community to make the International Year of Quinoa a success.

I Thank You.

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