

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ministers, Esteemed Delegates,

It is a great honour and privilege to address this distinguished gathering on behalf of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the Kingdom of Spain** and to the **International Olive Council** for their warm hospitality and the excellent organization of this ministerial meeting.

We also thank you for your continued efforts in uniting nations around the shared values of development, sustainability, and prosperity embodied by the olive tree.

The Olive Sector in Uzbekistan: Achievements and Progress

In Uzbekistan, the olive tree is gaining increasing recognition as a crop of promise, resilience, and value.

Although our country lies beyond the traditional Mediterranean basin, we are actively exploring opportunities to integrate olive cultivation into our diverse agricultural landscape.

Over the past two decades, **pilot plantations** have been established in several regions, notably **Surkhandarya** and **Andijan**, where climatic conditions are most favorable. Since **2003**, over **75 hectares** of olive trees have been planted, and several private enterprises and farmers have contributed to testing and developing suitable varieties.

A remarkable example is the plantation of **64,000 Arbequina olive seedlings** imported from Turkey and planted on **49.5 hectares** in **Surkhandarya region** (*Altynsay district*). Despite challenges posed by harsh winter conditions, adaptive cultivation techniques such as mulching and drip irrigation have been introduced to enhance resilience.

In addition, at the **Bandikhon Experimental Station** of the **Horticulture, Viticulture, and Winemaking Research Institute**, research is ongoing to develop **stress-resistant olive varieties** and to establish technologies for producing both olive oil and preserved products.

This includes trials with **Gemlik, Arbequina, Nikitinsky, and Azerbaijani varieties**, covering approximately **10 hectares** of experimental fields.

These initiatives mark the beginning of a long-term national effort to introduce olive cultivation adapted to Uzbekistan's unique environment.

Current Challenges in the Olive Sector

The olive sector worldwide faces a number of pressing challenges: climate change, water scarcity, soil degradation, and increasing market competition. Extreme weather events — including heatwaves, droughts, and frosts — have become more frequent, threatening both yield and quality. Moreover, the sustainability of olive oil production depends on balancing profitability with ecological responsibility.

For Uzbekistan, our main challenge lies in **adapting olive cultivation to cold winters**. Recurrent frosts reaching **-13 to -17°C** have caused significant damage to plantations, as recorded in the winters of 2013, 2021, and 2023. Despite these setbacks, many olive trees have shown remarkable **regenerative capacity**, sprouting again from their roots — a testament to their resilience.

We also recognize the need for **scientific collaboration**, **genetic improvement**, and **climate-resilient practices** to ensure the viability of olive cultivation in Central Asia.

Proposals for the Future

In light of these challenges and opportunities, we would like to propose the following:

1. Establishment of a Regional Research Partnership — between the International Olive Council, Mediterranean institutions, and Central Asian research centers to study cold-resistant and drought-tolerant olive varieties.

2. Technology and Knowledge Exchange — sharing of best practices in irrigation, soil management, and processing to improve the efficiency of emerging olive sectors.

3. Joint Investment in Olive Oil Production and Processing — to foster local value chains, ensure quality standards, and expand market opportunities.

4. Participation in Climate-Resilient Agriculture Programs — aimed at enhancing sustainability and biodiversity through olive cultivation in arid and semi-arid zones.

5. Promotion of Olive Culture as a Symbol of Peace and Sustainability — by expanding public awareness and education programs, especially for young farmers and researchers.

6. And finally, we want to express our **interest to host one of the upcoming sessions of the International Olive Council** in the coming years. We would be honoured to welcome our colleagues and partners to Uzbekistan to further strengthen our cooperation and exchange knowledge on the future of the olive sector.

Closing

Excellencies,

The olive tree, with its deep roots and enduring strength, symbolizes hope and perseverance — qualities shared by all our nations.

Uzbekistan stands ready to contribute to the collective vision expressed in the **Córdoba Declaration**, to strengthen global cooperation, and to build a sustainable and inclusive future for the olive sector.

I once again thank the organizers for their warm welcome and this opportunity to share Uzbekistan's experience and aspirations.

May our collaboration continue to bear fruit — for our farmers, our economies, and our planet.

Thank you!