



**Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
8 November 2004**

**Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realization of the
Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food
Security**

Ms Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Following last year's presentation to you by FAO on progress with the elaboration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food, I take great pleasure in reporting to the Committee on the conclusion of these negotiations.

The Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) established by the FAO Council to elaborate the Voluntary Guidelines has now completed this task. The process took less than the two years allocated for it and was highly participatory. Thus, stakeholders, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and international NGOs were able to participate fully in the discussions of the IGWG under relaxed rules of procedure specifically designed for this purpose. This facilitated a genuine dialogue between States and stakeholders and led to the fruitful conclusion of negotiations.

The IGWG has drafted Guidelines that are voluntary, yet reflect international legal standards and aim to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. This context also recognizes the importance of an enabling international environment and recalls some of the international commitments made in various forums to that end.

The Voluntary Guidelines are addressed to all States and are a practical tool for those States that wish to strengthen the implementation of the right to adequate food at the national level. The Guidelines build on the principles of the universality of all human rights and their interdependence, non-discrimination, good governance and the rule of law.

The IGWG adopted the text of the Voluntary Guidelines in September 2004 and submitted them to the FAO Committee on World Food Security, which in turn endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines and transmitted them to the FAO Council for final approval later this month. During the preceding twenty months FAO supported and facilitated the negotiations, notably by means of a series of information papers on specific dimensions of the right to food, and case studies of right to food implementation in Brazil, Canada, India,

South Africa and Uganda. FAO also initiated project support to a few countries to explore implementation of the right to adequate food, in Brazil, Sierra Leone and Honduras.

The Voluntary Guidelines are structured into three main sections:

- **Section I contains preface and introduction, including definitions of food security and the right to food.**
- **Section II is the main part of the Guidelines, entitled Enabling Environment, Assistance and Accountability.**
- **Section III contains International Measures, Actions and Commitments.**

Section II contains Guidelines 1 to 19, under the following headings:

1: Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law

2: Economic Development Policies

3: Strategies

4: Market Systems

5: Institutions

6: Stakeholders

7: Legal Framework

8: Access to Resources and Assets

9: Food Safety and Consumer Protection

10: Nutrition

11: Education and Awareness Raising

12: National Financial Resources

13: Support for Vulnerable Groups

14: Safety Nets

15: International Food Aid

16: Natural and Human-Made Disasters

17: Monitoring, Indicators and Benchmarks

18: National Human Rights Institutions

19: International Dimension

FAO is pleased to have contributed to the completion of the task within the time allocated. Nevertheless, it recognizes that this is but a first step in the strengthening of implementation of the right to adequate food. In the future, FAO will seek to extend and strengthen the partnerships it has developed in the elaboration of the Guidelines to continue the work of supporting Member Nations in their efforts to realize the right to food for all. We recognize that there still is work to do regarding the practical application of the Voluntary Guidelines. Some require more precise guidance for their implementation; for instance on how to elaborate national right to food strategies, how to monitor the right to food, and how to develop appropriate legislative frameworks. FAO needs to further develop its own capacity to assist its Members in this task, and hopes to

continue strengthening its partnerships with the Geneva-based human rights bodies, in particular this distinguished Committee.

Ms Chairperson, it gives me great pleasure to distribute copies of the Voluntary Guidelines to you in the five FAO languages, Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish. We believe that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights can contribute valuably to the use of the Guidelines, by referring to them in the examination of State Reports regarding the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger, and by working with FAO in the development of further material for the use of State Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.