

ADDRESS BY

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FISHERIES AND FOOD, IRELAND

ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT

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[Director General], distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to be here today, to represent Ireland on this important occasion.

As I address you today, the twin problems of hunger and poverty not only continue to exist but are growing; therefore it is right and proper that the FAO develops more effective ways to advocate for those in need and the most vulnerable. Meanwhile the first Millennium Development Goal has been not only proved elusive, but faces complete failure.

Each time the Member States of the UN meet, either at this or another forum, different aspects of an increasing problem are examined. What is clear is that the old ways have not worked. Business as usual will not solve this problem. As time has gone by, the circumstances and the emphasis have changed, but certain things are still undoubtedly true.

Despite increased disposable incomes in major parts of Asia and the movement of considerable numbers of families out of poverty, there are countries where progress in terms of the hunger reduction, particularly with the surge in food prices in recent years, has been negative. There is full agreement that agricultural productivity must be increased and that greater resources must be directed towards smallholder farmers, and in particular towards women farmers, on whom the greatest burden often falls.

What has become obvious is that it is not possible to look at hunger in isolation, it needs a global approach, and ending it needs a truly global partnership. All countries have to commit now to this comprehensive approach, which will be a long-term partnership, not on any one aspect that might be currently in vogue, but a new agreed approach, with a renewed global architecture, which will give the UN system the tools required to improve nutritional status and fight hunger.

Ireland wants to see this Summit produce an action orientated outcome which will make clear the roles and responsibilities of all - UN agencies, governments, civil society and the private sector - to take action to develop a truly global partnership for the development of food security. A vital part of this process is the ongoing reform of FAO to ensure that it is fit for purpose and ready to assist the developing countries. Ireland has prioritised and supported this type of institutional reform at FAO. In addition, Ireland wishes to see the Committee on World Food Security, become a revitalised forum where all views and a wide range of expertise can contribute to solutions.

People need safe, nutritious, affordable food. Across the globe, countries need to sustainably increase agriculture production to improve food availability and most importantly locally resilient food systems must increase access for the poor and the vulnerable. This approach has to involve all stakeholders such as smallholder farmers including women, governments and the private sector. Real, sustainable and resilient economics are required, because hunger is the ultimate expression of poverty.

Let this Summit cause all countries to redouble our efforts around the common aim of banishing hunger, as we can look back on a year where crisis has brought about a genuine renewed impetus for change. Ireland supports the valuable work of the UN High Level Task Force, and their initiatives to improve the working of the UN system without recourse to the establishment of new institutions and groups. Here at FAO all of us have championed the recent agreed reform of the Committee for World Food Security which has given us a valuable global platform which we can use to bring greater focus on food security.

Other initiatives such as, the five principles of the L'Aquila food security initiative, are another vital strand in this global process. The success of the comprehensive approach can be seen in initiatives like the African CAADP initiative.

It is clear that as we go forward, none of the challenges have gone away, and some such as climate change have become even more urgent. Achieving food security for all, while also dealing decisively with climate change, is the great twin-challenge facing us all on this planet. But this is one case where only a win/win solution will do.

By the end of this Summit, let us renew our commitments and resolve to bring together a global partnership, with a renewed approach and a global architecture that will support and encourage comprehensive country led responses to end hunger for good.

We will meet again. There is no magic, instant solution. But the next time the meeting should be measuring progress and show how countries are getting closer to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the 1996 World Food Summit. Let us work together now, in a new more effective way, which will give a sustainable way to end global hunger forever.

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