

**World Summit on Food Security
Rome, 16-18 November 2009**

Statement by Mr Össur Skarpédinsson,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iceland
17 November 2009, pm

**Mr Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished
Heads of delegations, ladies and gentleman,**

We face a dire challenge:

We are responsible for eradication of the ghost of hunger and malnutrition from one billion people.

This challenge has to be viewed in light of the commitment the leaders of the world, made more than a decade ago at the World Food Summit here in Rome, where we undertook to halve the number of the worlds hungry by 2015.

To this most vulnerable segment of the global population we pledged to do our utmost to create a ray of hope - and on the occasion of the new Millennium, we as a global community renewed this pledge.

We have to face the fact that we have fallen short of our own expectations, and most regrettably, of the hopes of the vast number of people who are in great and immediate need.

The reasons are several: We failed to use the great wealth created prior to the recent economic

recession to bolster food security in the hungry parts of the world.

We also failed by reducing severely the share of agriculture in development cooperation. During the last 20 years it has fallen from 18 to abysmal 3%.

We also were not quick enough to effectively combat the global warming with its serious implications for food security in the world.

Its effects will be seen in reduced water reservoirs needed for agricultural production, in the submersion of valuable agricultural lands in low-lying countries, increased desertification, deforestation and floods.

I might add that the pressure to use arable land to produce bio-fuel to alleviate emission of greenhouse gases is also likely in the near future to negatively affect food security.

The most important task, therefore, is for our governments and NGOs to lock arms to reach a legally binding conclusion at the Copenhagen meeting in December.

If there is any organization that can take the lead in that fight it is FAO.

As any other big institution, FAO is often criticized – as it should be – but I want to take this opportunity to thank FAO for quite impressive achievements in the past, and to thank Dr. Diouf for his leadership as Director-General.

Mr. Chairman,

Every nation has to assess its abilities on how to increase sustainable food production and investment in sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

I would like to mention especially three things, where Iceland can share expertise and contribute to increase food security.

In Iceland, we have over 100 years of experience in reclaiming land from erosion through the oldest Soil Conservation Service in the world. To share this with the developing countries we have launched a new UN University Training Programme in offering land restoration and soil conservation technology.

The staple of our livelihood, however, are our strong fish stocks.

As a former fisherman from the Icelandic deep-sea trawlers, and as an old Ph.D. in fisheries biology myself, I am proud to say, that Iceland's track-record in the sustainable management of fish stocks is second to none.

Through careful sustainable management most of our stocks are in good shape. Our legendary cod is one of two stocks in the world that is on the incline.

This achievement is important, bearing in mind

that more than one billion people depend on fish as their main source of protein. 95 % of those live in developing countries.

In this respect, I am happy to tell this august assembly that despite a financial crisis we have ensured that the UN University's Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland is fully funded - and available to you.

To work the fields, to enhance agricultural production, you also need energy – most of all, renewable energy. Energy poverty is one of the causes of food deprivation.

In Iceland, we have developed a most advanced expertise in the use of geothermal resources to produce energy. Many developing countries have geothermal potential, but lack the technology to use it to increase their food production. I could mention all the East-African countries, Indonesia, quite a few countries in Latin-America, and several more.

Under the auspices of the UN University, Iceland has for a long time operated a geothermal training programme, which now is advanced to Master's and Ph.D. degrees.

We, therefore, have a valuable expertise and experience to offer.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

I would like to express my appreciation to the FAO

for calling for this *World Summit on Food Security*. The mammoth problem of one billion people suffering from hunger and malnutrition calls for swift and determined solutions.

Iceland has had a very fruitful working relationship with FAO and Dr. Diouf especially. We are determined to increase that in future.