

## **UNDP Statement**

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### **World Summit on Food Security**

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In 2000, the world voiced its development aspirations in the Millennium Declaration, and the international community pledged to ‘spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.’ These were captured in the Millennium Development Goals, which were not just about development objectives, but encompassed universal human values and rights, such as freedom from hunger, the right to health, the right to education, and responsibility to the future. Over the next eight years, significant progress was made, even in the very poor nations, in addressing the most fundamental of the goals, that of escaping poverty and hunger.

Since then, however, multiple crises – food, fuel and economic, of course but also, of a different magnitude and time scale, climate change and environmental degradation - that are continuing to unfold, have slowed or rolled back many of those achievements. Deep-rooted structural deficiencies that arose from years of neglect are yet to be fixed and the questions of both the sustainable production of adequate amounts of food, and the access of all to nutrition sufficient for their needs over every stage of their lives remain as urgent as ever.

For a poor family with little to fall back upon, food and nutrition security are intimately linked to many, seemingly disparate, events. The sudden illness of an earning member or a lost job, a remittance that fails to arrive, the birth of a baby that adds to and changes the daily nutritional requirement, price volatility that makes it more risky, and therefore harder, to invest in production – each of these challenges, and many more, are food security crises for households around our world today, especially those that teeter on the margin of barely adequate nourishment. For the chronically poor, events such as these only deepen their hunger, and trigger far-reaching and tragic consequences across all of our treasured MDGs. Add to this, the exacerbating effects of climate change, which require us to go beyond short term quick fixes and include explicit considerations of sustainability, along with greater risk expectations in all that we do, and the problem is grave indeed.

Interventions that successfully address the multiple predicaments of these families and are sustainable over time, must cut across several sectors, while recognizing and responding to the special characteristics that render one household more vulnerable than another. This is a complex task and can only be achieved through greater coordination at all levels among all players, reinforcing the need for a multi-stakeholder effort. The Secretary General’s High Level Task Force – where UNDP is an active member – has enabled notable progress in inter-agency collaboration over the last year.

Coordination at the global level must continue and become even more effective; and must be matched at the country level so that it leads to concrete and sustainable results. Country leadership and national ownership are essential for

this, and UNDP stands ready to help along several overlapping dimensions in this effort.

First, in its role as chair of the UNDG and custodian of the RC system, it brings the UN system together at the country level for working with national governments in a coherent way. The UNCT, accessible, multi-dimensional, credible with a wide array of stakeholders, present in a wide range of countries and with staying power through thick and thin, is an asset for countries to draw upon for coordinated support to their plans; as well as with NGOs, foundations, the private sector and other players. Mozambique, Ethiopia, Liberia, Jordan and many other countries provide examples of such partnerships working on the ground.

Second, it is essential to ensure that the vulnerable and voiceless find a place in food security solutions, be they marginalized minorities, the disabled, those with chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, poor girls and women or indigenous people. An important element of this is the proper design of social protection systems that can be scaled up during periods of crisis - nutrition programmes, employment guarantee schemes, conditional cash transfers and others - as well as the appropriate targeting of support for productive activities. A parallel element would be the on-going collection and analysis of disaggregated data so as to understand and monitor better the many hurdles faced by the especially vulnerable. UNDP can help, with other partners, to actualize both of these elements.

Third, the long abandonment of many sectors that are now perceived as crucial, has whittled away, or failed to develop, institutions and mechanisms for

delivering effectively at the level that really matters – that of individual farmers and households. We see this in the erosion of agricultural extension systems; in the neglect of simple but powerful tools, such as secure and fungible land title and credit; and in the lack of attention given to helping the poor move towards sustainable livelihoods all of which are needed to address this dynamic, many-layered problem. Crucial to all of these is monitoring and accountability, leading to a drawing of lessons, and mid-course corrections when needed.

As part of a coordinated, cross-sectoral response UNDP, can help by building the capacity of the state at national, sub-national and local levels. This can take the shape of improving the functioning of national institutions through better organizational arrangements and implementation systems, while nurturing strategic planning and management skills. It can work toward ensuring sound mechanisms for local service delivery; strengthening pro-poor and pro-agriculture land governance; creating opportunities for inclusive access to economic opportunity, knowledge and technologies in both public and private sectors; and ensuring that state-citizen accountability mechanisms work to meet human development needs. All of these would complement the range of critically important programmes that would draw upon the specific strengths of the various institutions around this table and beyond.

Finally, and I am now turning back to the crucial interface between food security and ecological frameworks that allow food to be produced and harvested. Yes, we must pursue policies and incentives that can stimulate increased production and productivity. But we should ensure that these policies and incentives are not at odds or at war with productive ecosystems but rather aligned so that we stop

ruining the water sources and the soils that all crops depend on, but that we rather replenish them. A fair and ambitious climate deal will be needed to stabilize temperature increases and avoid catastrophic damage, encourage less carbon-intensive production and consumption, and ensure climate financing to support inclusive economic growth and sustainable poverty reduction. Such a deal must not be at odds with putting in place the incentives for sustainable land management where both carbon and nutrients are plowed back into the soils, enhancing food production for the longer term. Coupled with other innovations, at both global and country levels, we can reverse desertification and land degradation and loss of biodiversity—all of which directly and indirectly threaten global food security today and in coming decades.

