



Statement
on behalf of the
Government of Australia

by

The Hon Stephen Smith MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Food and Agriculture Organization
High Level Conference on Food Security**

4 June 2008

Rome

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

Millions of the world's most impoverished people are being pushed deeper into poverty as a direct result of rapidly rising food prices.

The current food crisis is global. It can only be addressed through concerted and cooperative action by the international community.

Working together we can make a substantial difference for the better.

In Australia's view, tackling the many causes of food insecurity requires a systematic approach, which addresses immediate needs as well as the long term.

Consistent with our support for the decision by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to establish a Task Force on the Global Food Crisis, Australia is developing a comprehensive long-

term action plan for food security which will draw on our expertise in semi-arid agriculture research, production and adaptation.

Australia has committed A\$30 million to the United Nations World Food Programme's emergency appeal. This is in addition to the A\$60 million we provided in 2007-08 and is aimed at addressing the most pressing humanitarian needs.

Mr Chairman

The world faces a combined challenge. Demand for food is increasing at the same time as we see rising input costs and drought causing supply constraints.

Through our development assistance program, we will work with our partners to reduce dependence on food aid and increase crop and livestock production.

Mr Chairman

We know that finding a global response to the challenge of climate change is a necessity.

Australia's food production is particularly vulnerable to the long-term effects of climate change.

Australia is committed to working in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to deliver an effective post-2012 framework by developing a comprehensive domestic response to climate change.

Adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change is a key priority for agriculture and food production. Australia has funded a A\$130 million initiative to help our primary industries respond and adapt to the challenge of climate change.

We also recognise our responsibility to assist countries vulnerable to the impacts of dangerous climate change.

We are committed to working with the small island states of the Pacific.

As well, the international community needs to work together to ensure biofuel production is environmentally sustainable and balanced with food production priorities.

Importantly, Mr Chairman, to protect and enhance food supplies, Australia remains convinced that the most effective long-term measure is the dismantling of barriers that distort trade in agricultural products.

Australia has consistently argued in the WTO that a strong commitment to further liberalisation of world agricultural is vital

to ensuring better functioning agricultural markets and more stable food prices.

Australia remains focused on achieving a successful conclusion to this year's WTO Doha Round of negotiations. We urge other countries to redouble their efforts to this end.

These negotiations are the best opportunity the world has to reform and improve international trade in agriculture and global food trade flows.

We urge countries to refrain from continuing or imposing counterproductive measures placing restrictions on food and agricultural exports.

Mr Chairman

Australia acknowledges and welcomes the leadership the FAO has shown in focusing the world's attention on this crisis.

We urge the FAO to refocus and revitalise its work by taking forward the recommendations of the independent external evaluation of the FAO.

By focusing on its core mission, a leaner, more efficient FAO will be better able to tackle the pressing challenges confronting us all.

We also encourage the FAO and its member states to maximise the impact of their work by closely coordinating with other agricultural agencies, particularly the World Food Programme.

Mr Chairman

The combination of these measures – immediate humanitarian assistance, research and developmental assistance which embraces

production technology, adaptation and output, addressing climate change and bioenergy issues and securing a Doha Round outcome, provide a firm basis for systematically confronting the globe's food security crisis.

Thank you.