State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI)

9 October 2012

Speaking points for the FAO Director-General

- Thank all of you for presence. Following the presentation made by Mr Jomo Sundaram, I want to highlight four points today.
- First, The numbers revealed show that we have made good progress in the reduction of the hungry. Between, 1990-1992 and 2010-2012:
 - a. The **number** of hungry people in developing countries fell from 980 million to 852 million.
 - b. And the **proportion** of the hungry in the developing world fell from 23.2 percent to 14.9 percent.
- 2. However, we need to recognize that these numbers are still too high: one in eight people are hungry in a world of plenty, that already has enough food to feed all.

- 3. This is unacceptable. For us at FAO and at the Rome-based agencies, the only acceptable number for hunger is zero. We will pursue this goal.
- 4. Second, we have lost speed in recent years. In fact, the projections show that the number of hungry people stopped falling in the period 2007-2009.
- 5. Several factors help explain this, most importantly, the economic slowdown which means less jobs and lower incomes; the higher level of food prices and food price volatility. Food price volatility, in particular, affect the poorest consumers and producers.
- 6. **Third**, let me point out that we have seen very different trends among the different regions.
 - a. We are losing the battle in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa we have today around 234 million hungry people. In the early nineties they were 170 million. That is an increase of 64 million.
 - b. Hunger has also gone up in the Near East and North

 Africa, mainly due to the conflicts in the region, clearly

- showing the link between conflict, food insecurity and hunger. They went up from 22 million to 41 million.
- c. On the other hand, Asia and the Pacific are on target to reach the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of hungry people. **And** the World Food Summit target of halving the absolute number of hungry people.
- d. It has reduced the proportion of the hungry from 24.7 percent in the early Nineties to 14 percent. And the total number of hungry from 723 million to 528 million.
- 7. However, I also want to highlight that, around the world, we have success stories of countries that have made significant progress in the fight against hunger. Here are a few examples:
- In Asia, Vietnam reduced the total number of hungry by almost
 percent and Thailand by 75 percent between 1990-1992
 and today.
- 9. In Africa, Ghana has managed to reduce the total number of hungry in 87 percent; Mali had reduced the total hungry in 44 percent before the situation worsened; and Cameroon has reduced the total hungry by 35 percent.

- 10. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Peru has reduced the total number of hungry in 54%, Nicaragua in 49 percent and Brazil in 40 percent.
- 11. My **fourth** and final message is that we still can achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger. But that would still leave around 500 million undernourished people in the world. As I said before, that is unacceptable
- 8. But as the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out at the Rio+20 conference, we need to look beyond the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of hungry people in the world. We need to look towards the **total** eradication of hunger, answering the call made by UN Secretary-General when he launched his "Zero Hunger Challenge" at Rio+20.
- 9. Bold goals are needed so that society as a whole embraces this cause, backing and pushing governments to transform political will into action at the scale needed to eradicate hunger.
- 10. We cannot settle for less than the total eradication of hunger and we are working towards this goal. Thank you.