

International Conference Organized by the International Jacques Maritain Institute and the National Committee for the relations between the Italian Government and FAO in scientific cooperation with LUMSA University

“The Right to Food and the Cost of Hunger”

Rome, Sala di Porta Castello, 20-21 June 2003

Conclusions

(prepared by the International Jacques Maritain Institute)

Introduction

The International Conference on ‘The Right to Food and The Cost of Hunger’ took place on 20-21 June 2003. The Conference was organised by the National Committee for the Relations between the Italian Government and FAO, and the International Jacques Maritain Institute, under the patronage of the Ministry for Agricultural and Forest Policies and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and with the technical collaboration of FAO.

In the presence of economists, jurists, social analysts and experts in various fields, and the representatives of governments and public and private international organisations, civil society, and the Bureau of the Inter-governmental Working Group set up by the FAO Summit in 2002 with the task of drawing up ‘guidelines’ for the implementation of the right to food, the Conference sought to identify the most effective strategies and measures by which to combat hunger and poverty using a model for development based on human rights.

The Conference recorded the consensus reached by participants on the following points:

1. In order to combat hunger and poverty in an effective way, it is essential to realise the right to adequate food at both the national and international levels.
2. The progressive implementation of the right to food is essential if the objectives of the Millennium and the World Food Summit of 2002 are to be reached.
3. States have a primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food at a national level by ensuring that their own citizens have physical and economic access to adequate food.
4. In order to protect the right to food, national laws should ensure that all subjects under their jurisdiction, including private, national and international companies, do not prevent groups and individuals from having access to food or to the basic resources required to obtain it.
5. At the international level, the right to food must be systematically and consistently borne in mind during international negotiations on international trade, international finance (including foreign debt), technical assistance and intellectual property rights, as well as in the policies and programmes of international organisations.

In particular:

- States – individually or as a community – have the duty to respect the right to food in other countries, i.e. they cannot engage in actions that obstruct the access to food of groups or individuals;
 - the access of developing countries to world agricultural markets must be fostered by progressive measures that ensure (over time) conditions of equality with the rich countries of the world;
 - it is important to develop technical assistance in relation to the exports of developing countries, especially as regards sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and health controls.
6. The realisation of the right to food involves the responsibility of the State to create the conditions whereby individuals can themselves provide for their own sustenance. States - if necessary in co-operation with the international community – are responsible for directly meeting the needs of those who are not able to feed themselves on their own, *inter alia* through social and food safety nets.
7. Social and food safety nets must:
- be able to satisfy the right to food of individuals by ensuring a minimal nutritional level;
 - be designed in a human rights based approach, laying special emphasis on: partnership rather than mere welfare; decentralised systems of management; transparency; the participation of the involved communities ; and human dignity;
 - be directed towards well-identified vulnerable groups;
 - have a level of flexibility that enables them to address the different needs and conditions that prevail;
 - be cost-effective.
8. Rural development is fundamental to the achievement of food security and the realisation of the right to food. The use of available resources must meet the criteria of social, economic and environmental sustainability. In this context, collaboration with the private sector and civil society is of primary importance.
9. States must be committed – *inter alia* through international co-operation – to the implementation of measures directed towards fostering rural development through the best use of the human, environmental and productive resources that are present at a local level.
10. In a society that respects human rights, emphasis should be laid on the importance of legal institutions to defend the right to food and of suitable and efficient tools for the monitoring and the resolution of disputes.