

Presentation by
Mr Martin Nissen
Embassy of Germany, Paris, France
on the occasion of the opening of the
Right too Food Forum
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Dear Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Mr. Ghanem, thank you very much for your nice introduction offering me the fatherhood for the Voluntary Guidelines.

It is good to be back here and to see so many colleagues who became friends in the four years we were working together at the Voluntary Guidelines - a unique document in many respects with a lot of stories around its development which has enough substance for an interesting book about the functioning of international policy and with some funny parts - for example about boat trips on the river Spree.

We all realized that the fight against hunger had been a failure in many parts of the world because of a lack of political will - both in industrial countries as well as in poor countries highly affected by hunger. And we were aware that other examples in some countries existed - worth to be integrated in the Guidelines.

Our idea was it would be very helpful to combine an approach based on the human right to food with a manual for governments, international organizations and the civil society how to fight hunger in a multi-dimensional way. With other words: we had to describe the instruments and the necessary interaction with others tools.

At that time I think every one of us had the experience being asked by head-shaking colleagues and friends: so what you want is that every hungry person can go to court to sue his government for food.

My answer was always: I want that governments can be sued for necessary action to use internationally proven tools to prevent hunger in their country. Most times the reaction was interesting, the shaking head turned to one side indicating: that sounds reasonable.

The necessity to create a comprehensive approach to fight hunger with the integration of actors from many other sectors - this necessity was simply proven by the fact that single-targeted development cooperation projects to tackle the hunger problem mainly resulted in failures. When we started the deliberations there was a good description by the former World Bank director of agriculture who said: when I look at the agricultural projects in the last decades I see a big cemetery.

The deliberations on the Guidelines became very fruitful because of the special way to integrate the contributions of civil society and the other international organizations.

I remember a lot of rather sharp discussions even in between the group of supporters of the Voluntary Guidelines about the question how pragmatic or dogmatic we should follow the elaborations written by human rights experts for the WFS 1996.

The nature of FAO as a body which is based on common ground between the member states made it of course finally necessary to find a lot of compromises.

But in the end of the deliberations most of us were impressed that we agreed upon a text which **really** can serve as a manual for those governments who want to fight hunger and malnutrition.

And as such it gives a strong instrument against political excuses from those who want to hide the fact that they don't have the necessary political will to improve the nutritional situation in countries suffering from hunger.

We needed a lot of people with a clear vision, with a high profile of credibility and ability to convince others to manage this process.

I see that many in the audience understood this remark as a compliment in their direction. This is exactly what I wanted to express.

There were political coincidences within the time of discussing the Guidelines, which had nothing to do with this process, but which had a very important impact how the deliberations changed their direction at a certain time. As I already mentioned enough stuff for a good book...

Another precondition for the Guidelines was the existence of a substantial financial funding. We needed a lot of money to organize the work on the Guidelines. The meetings here in Rome, the national studies to support the elaborations, the coordination of the work of the NGOs and the secretariat based here in Rome wouldn't have been possible without the funding from several governments like those of Switzerland, Norway and Germany.

Our objective to create the Guidelines as a manual of the successful tools to eradicate hunger and malnutrition was **never to create a paper, but a tool** which should be used in many countries in the world.

And I am very interested to hear from you about the usefulness of this tool.

Thank you for your attention.