

World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, Brazil ,January 28, 2005)

SPEECH OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL FOOD AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION – UN

International Seminar on “CITIZEN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION TO
ERADICATE HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE WORLD” .

On behalf of the Director General Jacques Diouf of the Food Agriculture Organization I wish to thank the organizers of the World Social Forum for inviting him to address the International Seminar on “Citizen Education and Social Mobilization to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty in the World”. I also bring his personal greetings for a successful meeting and convey his personal regrets that he cannot be here personally for his schedule would not permit.

The World Social Forum is a most significant and important global forum for human justice, equality, and social reform in the world; in addition to being the world’s largest platform of the social movement of civil society.

Therefore significant and meaningful outcome are expected from these many meetings and dialogues. Civil society’s participation and leadership are critical if there is to be meaningful development in the world. The Director General has requested that I represent him at this important seminar on Civic Education for Eradication of Hunger and Poverty in the World. My remarks and presentation will help you understand why **FAO has accepted to be the lead agency of the global partnership focusing on Education for Rural People**, why this issue is so relevant for our common commitment in reducing poverty and hunger, and why it is important to have partnerships to work together to achieve such goals.

The Problem: Illiteracy is strongly correlated to hunger and is mainly a rural phenomenon which hinders rural development, threatens productivity and health and limits opportunities to improve livelihoods. This problem is particularly severe in Africa. The weakness of basic education services in rural areas are related to the fact that many countries still lack capacities to formulate policies, as well as the experience and the partnerships needed to plan and deliver effective services for rural people. In order to succeed in our struggles against hunger and poverty (MDG 1) and improving basic standards of human development (MDGs 2- 6) as well as environmental sustainability (MDG 7) we need to improve partnerships. As I shall indicate with figures and information shortly, the challenge is serious and none of us can succeed alone or by doing business as usual. **The ERP partnership**, within the IAAH, aims at bridging partners from the education and the agriculture and rural development sector and is putting a special emphasis on Africa. Bridging these two areas of expertise and supporting governmental ministries as well as the non governmental entities in joining their forces in the struggle against poverty and hunger is the comparative advantage of the **ERP partnership**.