

October 2006



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للامم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
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Organisation  
des  
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pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

### Thirty-second Session

Rome, 30 October – 4 November 2006

### STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Honourable (Heads of State and Government),

Honourable Ministers,

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to welcome you to the Special Forum and to the Thirty-second Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

It is a pleasure to welcome the representatives of the member governments of the CFS and the representatives of international organizations, NGOs and civil society.

I wish to express my special gratitude to those who made a point of attending this meeting, despite their many commitments. In doing so, they have demonstrated their determination to remove the scourge of hunger and poverty that afflicts 800 million of our fellow human beings.

Allow me, Mr Chairman, to congratulate you on your election to guide the work of the CFS for the next two years. Since its inception in 1974, this Committee has played a central role in formulating national and international approaches to combat food insecurity. I am certain that under your guidance the CFS will continue to work effectively towards eradicating hunger and poverty.

I also wish to thank the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr Salif Diallo, Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries of Burkina Faso, and all the other CFS officers for their exemplary work during their term of office.

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Ten years ago, the Heads of State and Government of 186 countries solemnly pledged to eradicate hunger, with the short-term objective of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015.

This commitment was reiterated by the World Food Summit: *five years later* held in June 2002.

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the Heads of State and Government of more than 155 countries took a similar course by setting themselves the target of halving the proportion of undernourished people by 2015.

I wish to recall that the Summit had recommended that governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and relevant international organizations, undertake by 2006 at a Special Forum to coincide with a regular session of the CFS, "a mid-term review of achieving the target of reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015".

In follow-up to that recommendation, this CFS session will be preceded by a two-day Special Forum.

### **Aim and purpose of the Special Forum**

At this midway point towards the target set by the Summit, the Special Forum has been convened to assess progress in implementing the World Food Summit Plan of Action and to determine the extent to which the last ten years have brought us closer to the objectives of reducing world hunger.

The Forum will also be expected to put forward proposals on measures needed to facilitate achievement of the Millennium Development Goal and the World Food Summit objective.

Governments, international institutions, civil society, the private sector and other actors will thus have an opportunity to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue, with balanced regional participation, and pool their efforts to tackle the root causes of hunger and poverty. Thematic areas crucial to the success of our endeavour – aid and investment, agrarian reform and rural development – will be discussed in depth.

### **Major steps taken to facilitate achievement of the WFS objective and MDG**

A number of steps have been taken to facilitate achievement of the World Food Summit objective and the Millennium Development Goal:

1. The International Alliance Against Hunger was formed after the WFS: *five years later* as a powerful and effective advocate for the eradication of hunger and poverty in the world and as a means of fostering the creation and growth of strong national alliances against hunger. So far some 50 countries have established national alliances against hunger and a further 50 have expressed an interest in doing so.
2. Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security have been adopted.
3. FAO's Special Programme for Food Security designed to help achieve the goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015 is operational in over 100 countries and is being extended as a national food security programme in 15 countries.
4. A programme for the prevention and control of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases has been put in place in FAO, together with a crisis management centre.

## Progress towards the WFS objective and MDG

It is encouraging to note that the percentage of undernourished population in developing countries fell between 1990-1992 and 2001-2003.

However, in terms of the target of halving the number of undernourished people, the overall number of undernourished people in developing countries remained at 820 million in 2001-2003.

The aggregate number of undernourished people in developing countries and changes in trend however conceal broad disparities at regional and country level. At the regional level, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean have seen a fall in percentage and number of undernourished people since 1990-1992, although the average rate of reduction in each of these regions is below the level needed to achieve the WFS objective for 2015. On the other hand, in the Near East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, the number of undernourished people has increased since 1990-1992.

Reducing hunger and poverty is more challenging for countries characterized by low economic growth, high population growth and limited agricultural resources. There are 32 countries in this category, with levels of undernourishment ranging from 29 to 72 percent of the population. Yet, regardless of their poor results to date, several of these countries could make significant progress in reducing hunger and poverty by giving higher priority to agricultural development and local food production. Such a strategy has been adopted by the countries that have posted good results in this regard.

The leaders and decision-makers that are here today need to act responsibly and to follow through on commitments to eradicate hunger and poverty. More than 800 million people will sleep on an empty stomach tonight, tomorrow night and every night of the CFS meeting. We must remain alert to this sad reality as we endeavour in the next six days to identify solutions for the achievement of our objective.

*Mr Chairman,*

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

## Implications of continued hunger and undernutrition

The persistence of hunger is a liability to people and countries currently affected, but also to future generations. It seriously compromises development potential and it precipitates a vicious circle of hunger and poverty. The persistence of hunger in a world of plenty and of multiple technological resources is truly shameful.

The cost of not tackling world hunger will be extremely high. Countries with widespread hunger will clearly find it difficult to achieve economic and social development without first addressing the problem of hunger.

In this connection, I wish to stress that success in achieving the MDGs, especially the goals relating to achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability, hinges on eradicating hunger. We cannot achieve these important goals if hundreds of millions of people continue to suffer from hunger.

FAO's report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2004* underlined that undernourishment and deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals cause the death of more than 5 million children each year and that each child whose physical and mental development is jeopardized by chronic hunger stands to lose 5 to 10 percent in lifetime earnings. No amount of medicine can improve maternal health so long as mothers and women of child-bearing age

continue to suffer from hunger. The same applies to combating HIV/AIDS. And how are we going to persuade the hungry not to cut down trees for the sake of environmental sustainability?

Eradicating hunger and poverty is primarily the responsibility of national governments. Countries that have demonstrated that rapid progress is possible offer useful lessons on how to proceed. In most developing countries, agriculture and the rural sector form the backbone of the economy and represent the key livelihood for most of the population. In those countries, agriculture is the bedrock for economic and social development. Absolute priority must therefore be given to sustainable agricultural growth and the raising of smallholder productivity and competitiveness, if hunger and poverty are to be eradicated.

Above all, the eradication of hunger and poverty is essential to secure political stability and social consent, to ensure the exercise of democratic and basic human rights, to have good governance and to establish peace and security. The CFS has stressed that the prevalence of basic democratic rights and good governance is a precondition for lasting peace, without which any effort to eradicate poverty and food insecurity will inevitably fail.

While the main responsibility for addressing poverty and food security in developing countries remains with the countries themselves, their efforts will clearly be rendered more effective by international support, whether multilateral or bilateral. It is encouraging to note that the G8 countries meeting in Gleneagles in 2005 recognized that a substantial increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA), in addition to other resources, was needed to achieve the development goals and objectives of the international community, including the MDGs. The Gleneagles communiqué stated that the G8 and other donor commitments would lead to an increase in ODA of US\$25 billion a year to Africa and of US\$50 billion a year by 2010 in total ODA to all developing countries, using 2004 as the baseline year.

If they are to accelerate their development and to deal with hunger and poverty, developing countries need to enjoy more equitable international trade and greater access of their exports to developed country markets. In this connection, it is regrettable that the Doha trade talks had to be suspended because of an impasse in the negotiation process. It is my hope that negotiations will soon be resumed and that an agreement will be reached, thus ushering fair competition into global agricultural trade.

## **Conclusion**

*Mr Chairman,*

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I should like to conclude by stressing that the commitments made at the World Food Summit, the Millennium Summit and the World Food Summit: *five years later* must be more than expressions of intent. They must translate into practical action on the ground to eradicate the scourge of hunger that is harming our brothers and sisters throughout the world, with all the cruelty of its tragic consequences for present and future generations.

Let us join forces at this meeting which is an important opportunity for collaboration and exchange, so that hearts and minds may prevail over selfishness and short-sighted expediency.

I wish you every success in your work and thank you for your kind attention.