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منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
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联合国
粮食及
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Food
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United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
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Naciones
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para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

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COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Thirty-fifth Session

Rome, 14, 15 and 17 October 2009

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Wednesday 14 October 2009)

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Committee Bureau,

Excellencies,

Madam Executive Director of WFP,

Distinguished Representative of the President of IFAD,

Honourable Delegates and Observers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to begin by thanking you for being here in Rome to attend the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). You are gathering at a crucial time when the Committee is called upon to engage in reform that will help it fulfil its mission at a time when world food security faces extraordinary challenges.

In 1996, the World Food Summit organized by FAO made the solemn commitment to halve the level of hunger and undernutrition in the world. For that purpose it adopted a programme to achieve sustainable food security. That commitment was subsequently reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit in 2000, the World Food Summit: *five years later* in 2002 and the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security in June 2008.

Unfortunately, FAO's most recent data on world hunger and malnutrition indicate a situation that is even more worrying than in 1996. In the last three years, food insecurity has risen throughout the world, mainly on account of the global crisis of 2007-2008, triggered by soaring food prices and exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis that has shaken the world for more than a year. Thus the number of people suffering from chronic hunger and poverty in 2009 has risen by 105 million since last year, bringing the total number of undernourished people to over one billion, in other words one out of every six inhabitants of the world. Virtually all of these people live in the developing countries: 642 million in Asia and the Pacific; 265 million in sub-Saharan

Africa; 53 million in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 42 million in the Near East and North Africa.

In July, thirty countries were in a state of serious food crisis requiring emergency aid. They included twenty countries in Africa and ten in Asia and the Near East.

The food insecurity crisis represents a grave threat to world peace and stability as we saw in 2007-2008 with the food riots that broke out in 22 countries in all the regions of the world. We need to urgently secure broad international policy consensus to totally and rapidly eliminate hunger in the world and take all necessary measures to that end.

The challenge of eliminating hunger is not one of insufficient knowledge or resources available to the international community.

The vision of a world free from hunger is feasible. Concrete changes in political strategy are indispensable to achieve that objective.

The time has come to act responsibly and to address the many root causes of food insecurity by taking bold decisions and adopting lasting political, economic, financial and technical solutions.

The food crisis of 2007-2008 highlighted the inadequacy of current governance of world food security. Despite its many advantages, in particular its intergovernmental nature as a forum of sovereign States, its universal composition and its neutrality, the CFS has been unable to fully accomplish its mission of monitoring food security. There are at least five reasons for this: i) it lacks a high-level international policy-making body in the sectors of international cooperation and of food and agriculture; ii) it lacks an integrated framework for short-, medium-, and long-term sectoral scientific advice on hunger; iii) it lacks authority to evaluate and coordinate policies affecting world food security, in particular as regards production, agroindustry, trade, social safety nets and financing; iv) it lacks an effective mechanism to track food security decisions and actions at national and regional level; and v) it lacks the financial resources needed to carry out its mandate.

At the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security in June 2008, firm proposals were made to reinforce the governance of food security. One of these was to create a Global Network of High-Level Experts on Food and Agriculture and a Global Partnership to enhance consultation with all stakeholders and facilitate the coordination and implementation of actions on the ground. These proposals were discussed at numerous intergovernmental meetings, including the G8 Summit in Hokkaido in July 2008, the Special Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008, at L'Aquila in July 2009, and last month at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh.

The proposals for CFS reform that are tabled today are the end-product of an arduous task initiated and conducted by the member countries.

One aspect that clearly emerged from all the discussions was that we did not want to create new structures. Instead, we wanted to enhance, strengthen, coordinate, in other words reform, what existed, so that our action could be more effective.

At its Special Session in November 2008, the FAO Conference requested that the CFS - which is open to all Member Nations of FAO and all Member States of the United Nations as well as representatives of other international institutions, NGOs, the private sector and civil society, and which is tasked with monitoring the evolution of food security in the world - be able to fully play its role in the new system of world governance.

The new CFS should become a global forum for debate and convergence on the causes and consequences of food insecurity and the ways to address them. It should lay the principles for the formulation of appropriate policies and strategies and should have the means to monitor progress and to report on their implementation.

The members of the CFS, under the leadership of its Bureau, agree over the need to engage in its profound renewal. They have initiated a process of reform based on three principles: first, to include all stakeholders in CFS discussions; second, to serve as a genuine global forum for

Member States of the United Nations and Member Nations of FAO; and third, to adopt new processes of governance and decision-making. Thus, the Bureau has decided to create a Contact Group made up of representatives of Member States and Nations, international organizations and financial institutions, NGOs, civil society and the private sector.

I should like to stress that the CFS Bureau, under the guidance of Mrs Maria del Carmen Squeff and with continuous support from the representatives of member countries and the secretariat, has conducted a most rigorous and determined process of consultation on reform, based on the broadest of participation of all parties concerned.

I should like to assure you of my personal commitment and that of FAO in supporting the changes that are decided and in implementing all actions required to renew and strengthen the CFS as the cornerstone of the Global Partnership for Food Security.

A renewed and revitalized structure for the governance of food security should aim to:

1. keep agriculture and food security at the top of the international agenda for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition in the world;
2. fully understand the factors that affect world food security, the associated risks and remedial actions;
3. ensure close links between technical expertise and policy-making;
4. see that the international community adopts a coherent and systematic approach to food security with the capacity:
 - to respond rapidly to situations of food crisis and emergency in order to mitigate their negative effects;
 - to stimulate investment in agriculture and rural development and mobilize the funding required to ensure the food security of local populations;
 - to help bolster the governance of food security in a framework of coherence and synergy of policies, strategies and actions at all levels: national, regional and international.

If they are to be credible, CFS discussions and decisions must rest on solid scientific and technical evidence. Hence the importance of establishing a high-level network of experts. Its principal task will be to provide Member Nations, CFS organizations and other interested parties with information analyses and summaries that can help produce scientific advice on technical and economic matters. Such knowledge will shape policies, strategies and programmes to enhance food security and nutrition at global, national and local level.

FAO has long worked with sector-specific expert bodies and groups, in a precise juridical framework and following detailed procedures. It has thus received advice on policy and guidelines in many fields, including food, agricultural crops, animal production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, but also the agricultural commodity trade. Many of these bodies and groups have functioned continuously for decades. This mechanism must be strengthened and its inherent expertise must be better integrated for the benefit of the CFS.

Excellencies,

Honourable Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have before you a document on proposals for reform of the Committee on World Food Security. This is the result of a year of intense work that has not always been easy. Your dedication and determination have hastened the successful conclusion of the process of CFS reform. I should like to pay tribute to your exceptional commitment to this difficult task and the untiring efforts of all members of the CFS Bureau. I should like to express my deepest gratitude to you all for all this work carried out in a spirit of dialogue and convergence, which has allowed us to put forward a reform document that we hope can be adopted by consensus.

I hope that this session of the CFS will put us on the path of renewal so that we may lay the foundations of a Committee on World Food Security that is efficient, effectual and effective. Success in this undertaking will take us significantly forward towards the final eradication of hunger in the world.

It is therefore with eager anticipation that I await the outcome of your deliberations.

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