



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-fifth Session
"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"

Rome, Italy, 15-19 October 2018

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO

Mr. Mario Arvelo, Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security and Permanent Representative of Dominican Republic to FAO;

Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of WFP;

Ms. Cornelia Richter, Vice-President of IFAD;

Mr. Patrick Caron, Chairperson of the HLPE Steering Committee;

Ms. Zala Shardaben Fathesinh, small farmer and member of the Executive Committee of the Indian Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA);

Let me recognize the presence during this CFS week of Ministers from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, France, Germany, Guatemala, Lithuania, Mali, Oman, Spain, Togo, Uganda and Yemen

Honorable Vice-Ministers;

Ambassadors;

Heads of Delegation;

Distinguished Participants and Observers;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

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It is an honour to welcome all of you to this year's Session of the Committee on World Food Security, the CFS.

In 2015, world leaders defined the eradication of hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2) as a "sine qua non" condition for a fairer, safer and more peaceful world. However, hunger has only grown since then. Last year, about 821 (eight hundred twenty one) million people suffered from hunger. This accounts for 11% of the global population, one in nine people on the planet.

Nowadays, we have a lot of information on the problem of hunger in the world.

We know that hunger is mainly concentrated in protracted conflict areas in Africa, Near East and Southeast Asia.

We know that climate variability and climate extremes are also key drivers of hunger.

We know that among the most affected people are subsistence farmers that cannot even produce enough food for their own family.

But despite all this information that we have today, hunger continues to increase.

Let's be clear: if we do not transform our commitment into action, and take urgent measures to reverse this negative trend, hunger will undermine the entire 2030 Agenda.

Poverty will not be eradicated, natural resources will continue to degrade, and forced migration will continue to rise.

During lunchtime today, FAO will present the 2018 edition of the State of Food and Agriculture report.

SOFA 2018 addresses the link between migration, agriculture and rural development.

It shows that migration is not an option for many of the poorest rural people. They move because they have no other choice.

To tackle the root causes of hunger and forced migration, it is essential to improve the livelihoods of poor rural people threatened by disasters and conflicts.

Excellencies,

Let me say once again that hunger is not the only big challenge we are facing today.

Other forms of malnutrition are also increasing, particularly obesity.

The number of obese people is rising every year.

Obesity now affects about 13.3 percent of the adult global population, or 672 (six hundred seventy two) million people.

And differently from hunger, obesity is everywhere.

It is increasing in almost all countries.

Eight of the 20 countries in the world with the fastest rising rates of adult obesity are in Africa.

Last year, overweight affected 38 million children under five years of age. About 46 percent of them live in Asia, and other 25 percent live in Africa.

If we do not take urgent action, the number of obese people will soon be as high as the number of undernourished people in the world.

Overweight and obesity must be a subject of public policies, not only a private issue.

We know that unhealthy diets are the main driver of obesity.

So we need to empower, encourage and educate people to eat healthier food.

This includes targeted programmes to promote the consumption of local fresh food.

Governments must take the responsibility to provide healthy and nutritious food that is accessible and affordable for everyone.

This also includes national legislation.

We have the example of Chile, which has approved a law to provide more complete and understandable food labelling for the public.

We have the example of Canada, which has banned the use of some artificial trans fats in the production of food.

I would like to see countries committed to discussing policies and actions on nutrition.

Let me repeat what I said last year here in the CFS: the Committee must step up, lead the discussions, provide guidance, and deliver concrete policies on nutrition.

FAO made all needed efforts to bring back to Rome the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition to work in close partnership with the CFS.

I hope the CFS will now take the leading role on nutrition with the approval to develop the voluntary guidelines on food systems and nutrition.

We have no more time to lose.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me remind you that today is the International Day of Rural Women.

I would like to recognize once more the crucial role of rural women in the fight against extreme poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition.

FAO needs to keep moving forward in promoting gender balance and empowering rural women.

This means better representation in governance mechanisms and decision-making processes.

This also includes better access to land, resources, services and opportunities.

Last month, during the UN General Assembly in New York, FAO and the African Union launched a new report on rural women.

It is called “Leaving no one behind: Empowering Africa’s Rural Women for Zero Hunger and Shared Prosperity”.

The report is part of the strong collaboration between FAO and African Union to put in place gender targeted programmes that address women’s specific vulnerabilities in Africa.

Excellencies,

Let me also take this opportunity to highlight that the UN Decade of Family Farming starts next year.

As you know, FAO and IFAD have been designated as the leading agencies for the implementation of the Decade of Family Farming.

To officially launch the Decade, we will organize a high level event to take place here in Rome in the first semester of next year.

We are now taking action to constitute a Steering Committee to better manage the activities related to the Decade.

FAO and IFAD are inviting WFP to join us as part of the Steering Committee, which will also include the following stakeholders:

First, the three main international platforms of family farmers: World Rural Forum, La Via Campesina and World Farmers Organization.

Second, two representatives from member countries for each regional group on a rotational basis every two years.

And third, five regional organizations of family farmers also on a rotational basis every two years.

Family farming can contribute to the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals.

The Decade is an extraordinary opportunity to harness this potential.

Investing in family farming is investing in sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, let me also stress that the Agenda 2030 calls for strong and extended partnerships.

Since its reform in 2009, the CFS represents the foremost international platform of inclusiveness and cooperation.

It brings together the expectations, concerns and interests of a wide range of stakeholders.

We must strengthen the CFS and take advantage of this unique space of dialogue in the UN System that gather governments, civil society and the private sector.

I would like to reaffirm FAO's commitment to have a strong CFS.

I wish all of you productive debates and presentations during this CFS week.

Thank you for your attention