

My colleagues and I at the Gates Foundation would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Tiensin for his leadership and by congratulating the CFS Secretariat for organizing this virtual session of the plenary.

We have gathered with partners here at the CFS since the 2008/9 food crisis. Disturbingly, for the last five years the number of hungry in the world has gone up, a reversal in progress made over decades. Yet, our current moment is unique. The pandemic is driving more people into hunger and desert locusts are ravaging the fields of the vulnerable. We may yet be in the midst of a significant crisis.

The discussion today on a common narrative and the groundwork laid by the CFS and the HLPE is welcome. We cannot tackle the problem of hunger, crisis or not, if we do not pay it heed.

With the UN Food Systems Summit this fall, we may have a critical moment to draw global attention to the worsening trends on hunger, the challenge of adapting agriculture to climate change and the need for economic recovery for the most vulnerable from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the HLPE noted last year: the impact of COVID-19 crisis has been profound, revealing many aspects of food systems that require urgent rethinking and reform if we are to assure food security and the right to food for all.

A food systems approach, which emphasizes interconnectivity between people, the planet and health, is potentially a useful frame for linking these elements of our community's discussions to the global agenda, drawing friends and allies.

The role of this unique forum, the CFS, the role of all our friends and colleagues here, is not only to bring attention to crises and problems. Our role here, with you all, is to find constructive solutions and to collaborate.

As delve into discussion today, we'd like to express appreciation for the breadth of the challenge we face and suggest that we find points of commonality. The SDGs continue to be the most sophisticated and thoroughly vetted development targets, representing consensus from governments, civil society and the private sector. Therefore, we encourage the CFS and its stakeholders, to consider how existing points of consensus such as SDG2 and its targets could be leveraged both for a common narrative and a common solution.

A systems approach is essential for understanding the complexity of the multi-dimensional challenges we face. This should not lead to inaction. Rather, it can offer refinement to what we've already agreed to accomplish by 2030. This means that all of us here can lead the charge to invest in what we know works, track progress through better data and build an agricultural development architecture that delivers on the SDG2 agenda. We support earlier interventions from Canada and New Zealand on the Data workstream as these are concrete actions that we can collectively take as a part of our work at the CFS.

Thank you.