

CFS50 PLENARY
Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food
Michael Fakhri
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Your excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman-

My name is Michael Fakhri and I am the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

My job is to be an independent set of eyes, ears, and a good conscience for the UN system when it comes to addressing hunger, malnutrition, and famine from a human rights perspective.

For the last two and half years I have had a unique perspective on the food crisis.

I have consulted governments and communities from every region of the world. I have also directly engaged with over a dozen international organizations. And I participated at a working level for the Food Systems Summit as a critical voice on the Integrating team.

I have borne witness to how:

- Women face overwhelming degrees of discrimination and violence – all while having to feed their families.
- In 2021, the number of children in child labour globally increased to 160 million, the first rise in 20 years, and this is mostly in the agricultural sector.
- Workers, peasants, pastoralists, and fishers are essential to making sure we all eat. But they have been treated as expendable
- Indigenous peoples' homelands are being stolen, occupied, and decimated at genocidal rates.

Over the last year, the CFS has been a key player in ensuring that the right to food has been on the international institutional agenda. This is consistent with the fact that the right to food is at the core of the CFS's vision statement. We see this in a number of important places.

- The UN Global Crisis Response Group and the Food Systems Summit Hub recognize the importance of the right to food and the CFS.
- The Security Council is interested in the right to food and as a result invited me to brief them on the food crisis. In my briefing to the Security Council, I relied on a particular CFS tool – the *Framework For Action For Food Security and Nutrition In Protracted Crises*

- The G7 in a recent statement on food security recognized the importance of the CFS and the right to food.
- And I am happy to see that the Deputy Director General Jean-Marie Paugam from the WTO is here today. This is important because the last WTO Ministerial did not provide substantive results on food security and there remains no clear set of principles on food security and trade. I appreciate that the WTO has welcomed me in formal and informal dialogues and that UNCTAD proposed that the WTO use a right to food approach.

However, these forums have not generated any substantive or concerted action.

We are still missing a government-driven global plan of action to tackle the food crisis.

I am here today to ask you to keep the momentum going. To echo what a large number of delegates have stated – keep using the CFS to push all of us to work together and develop a coordinated response to the food crisis.

The CFS is the place of action.

The CFS can be the place to focus everyone in a way that not only gets us out of the food crisis, but gets everyone on the right path to face the challenges of climate change, to adapt to the new normal.

What makes the CFS unique is that everyone is welcome, and that civil society and indigenous peoples have a formal and substantive mechanism.

What makes the CFS powerful is the fact that the right to food is in its vision statement.

This is because human rights is the language of coherent and systemic action. It's not just a set of policy choices.

The challenge before is not a lack of solutions. The HLPE and CSIPM have provided excellent reports on how to tackle the food crisis.

Indeed, I support the CSIPM's proposal today as a response to the government's call to action that we've heard today.

I was asked by the General Assembly to provide solutions to the food crisis and I present my report to them on October 28.

I can tell the General Assembly two different stories –

One story is that the world's governments met in Rome and did nothing. That *you* did nothing to substantively respond to the food crisis. That *you* let the world down and pushed millions of more people into hunger, malnutrition and famine.

Or it could be another story. I could tell the General Assembly and the world that governments here today listened to each other and to the people. That you took the current momentum and stepped up at this historical moment. That you decided to create a substantive process. A process that clearly enables countries and international institutions to cooperate and coordinate a government-led multilateral plan of action to respond to the food crisis.

More broadly, it is up to you whether we can all go back home to our communities and families with a message of cynicism or a message of hope.