

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD
SECURITY (CFS) HIGH-LEVEL EVENT**

15 October 2020

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for the invitation to join you today.

**This Special Event comes on the heels of the High-level
Week of the General Assembly.**

**Despite the many challenges presented by the COVID-19
pandemic, leaders came together and demonstrated their
collective commitment to improve our world and to leave a
sustainable future for our children.**

**Now, more than ever, we cannot falter in our
commitments.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**I commend the Committee on Food Security for
convening this special event to keep a strong global focus
on food security and nutrition, especially in light of the
COVID-19 pandemic.**

This body should also be commended for bringing stakeholders together early on in the crisis to exchange experiences and lessons learned, as well as evidence-based policy guidance to overcome the challenges and uncertainties of this difficult time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be speaking today on the International Day of Rural Women.

This year's commemoration coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Twenty-five years after Beijing, we are facing a recession that is affecting women the most.

Women and girls are bearing the brunt of the massive social and economic impact of the pandemic.

Unless we act now, COVID-19 could wipe out a generation of fragile progress towards gender equality – particularly for rural women.

This International Day reminds us that, as we respond and recover from this crisis, we must step up our effort to reduce inequalities and place women at the centre of recovery plans, including rural and indigenous women who already play a critical role in improving food security and reducing rural poverty.

This has never been more important and will only be effective if these shifts are adequately financed and sustained over time.

I am pleased to hear that CFS is taking up Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as its next main topic, and I look forward to seeing the final product.

The rights of women have been denied for far too long, and it is time we recognize that food security and nutrition will only be achieved when women exercise their full agency and capacities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

COVID-19 has highlighted just how fragile our food systems are.

It has underscored the importance of prioritizing their transformation as a key component of our socio-economic recovery.

We need to build a far more resilient system, one that offers access to affordable, nutritious food that nurtures people and sustains the planet.

The increasing global recognition that transforming our food systems must be central in our effort to achieve the SDGs is the premise for the Food Systems Summit that the Secretary-General will convene next year.

It is also implicit in the awarding of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to the UN World Food Programme.

We need bold new actions, innovative solutions and strategies to transform our food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs.

We know transformation is possible.

It is happening right now – in many places, with many innovations – and with the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders.

The Food Systems Summit will be an opportunity to build on this momentum, engage leaders and catalyze the public around actions in their homes and communities.

The Summit will build on the best science and data and seek to motivate responsible actions that can support all people to progressively realize the right to food.

The CFS has a key role to play.

As the UN's foremost inclusive platform for food security and nutrition, with member countries seated alongside researchers, UN experts, civil society and business, it is critical to have CFS, with all its diversity of voices, engaged in the Summit process.

CFS members will be needed in the preparations for the Summit, but also to help lead on the outcomes and implementation.

The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition that you are developing have the potential to be a powerful contribution to the success of the Summit.

I urge all of you here today to complete these Guidelines soon and focus your attention on their uptake and utilization.

The CFS has a strong record in providing all countries with effective instruments for combatting hunger and malnutrition, such as your work on land tenure and responsible agricultural investment.

Your work on food security in protracted crises was brought to the attention of the Security Council earlier this year, with an extraordinary call for applying the CFS Framework for Action in Protracted Crises for addressing the twin challenges of conflict and food insecurity.

Food system transformation is about multi-stakeholder collaboration, working across silos and sectors; making tough choices in the interest of all – not just a few.

Let me close by thanking the CFS for its work, thanking you for your commitment to rebuilding better, and to everyone willing to contribute to the transformation of our food systems.

Thank you.
