

**EU Commissioner Urpilainen**  
**Speech at the Committee on World Food Security**  
**Thursday, 15 October 2020, 13h00-13h30**  
**via Zoom**

**SPEECH**

Mr Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Today, 15 October, we celebrate the International Day of Rural Women.

I could think of no better way of marking it than by being on this virtual stage with two great women – Amina Mohamed and Josefa Sacko.

Another great woman, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, once said that:

“The first freedom of man (...) is the freedom to eat”.

In these few words, she captured the very heart of the matter.

Every human, no matter who they are, has the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to freedom from hunger.

I was deeply touched last week, when I learned that the Nobel Peace Prize this year was for the World Food Programme. This is a testament to the fact that peace and zero hunger go hand in hand.

And yet, COVID-19, together with insecurity, pests and climate change, is pushing millions more to the brink of starvation.

This is unacceptable.

Unacceptable is too, that COVID is further widening the poverty gap between men and women.

We now know, it will push nearly 50 million more women and girls into extreme poverty by 2021.

This means regress, not progress, on our journey to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Dear friends,

We must have a long-term strategy for more sustainable and equitable food systems to provide healthy food for all.

There has never been a more important moment for this.

We are just 10 years away from our 2030 milestone.

And we are also at a crucial turning point, where we have to get it right. We have to build back a better, more sustainable and equal world.

A world with enough adequate food for all.

So my message to you today is this:

Let's put all our energy into reversing negative trends on nutrition and food security.

And put all our efforts into building sustainable food systems.

Because, this is how we are going to build back better and achieve the SDGs.

Dear colleagues,

The EU is committed to this joint work.

Firstly, with the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, we have proposed a vision to make Europe's food system sustainable in economic, social and environmental sense.

The challenge is global and we hope this will inspire change around the world.

We will engage with our partners through dialogue, cooperation and support, and work together for healthy people, societies and planet.

Secondly, we need more investment in people, especially in rural women.

They are the ones who feed their families, accounting for up to 80% of food production in developing countries.

We want to advance these goals with at least 85% of our new programmes.

And we are already delivering.

Thirdly, we should give our undivided attention to the most vulnerable people in food crises.

And I firmly believe that it is by bringing together development, humanitarian and peace efforts.

EU strongly supports the Global Network against food crises along with FAO, WFP and others.

Finally, we should never underestimate how important moments like these are.

The Committee on World Food Security is bringing us all around the same table to work together.

I know that I speak for us all when I say that we hope to see an ambitious outcome of the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

Let us work together to ensure it is “a people’s summit” and “a solutions summit”.

Dear friends,

When it comes to nutrition and food security – Tomorrow is right now.

Thank you for your attention!

(575 words)