

UK statement to FAO 38th Conference

Agenda item 9
18 June 2013

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last two days many speakers have underscored the need to address food insecurity and malnutrition and the major contribution that FAO can make. The stakes are too high for us not to dedicate ourselves fully to this urgent task. We applaud the progress by many countries in addressing hunger and poverty in line with the Millennium Development Goals. But it should focus all our minds that every minute of every speech or discussion we have here this week will still see more than 5 children die due to hunger-related causes. That means 64,000 children in the course of this 8-day Conference.

The High-Level Panel, co-chaired by Indonesia, Liberia and the UK, which submitted its report to the Secretary-General recently, recognised this challenge. Its focus on goals that move beyond proportions to reach 'Zero' in important areas, would mean that no one is left behind as we tackle extreme poverty and hunger around the world. We are confident that FAO, the other Rome agencies and the rest of the UN system will bring their expertise and leadership to this debate and to the critical work afterwards.

For its part, the UK is significantly strengthening its commitment to tackling hunger and undernutrition. As ADG Sundaram noted, the Governments of the UK and Brazil recently co-hosted in London a high-level event on Nutrition for Growth. This included discussion among government leaders, civil society and private sector representatives of the fact that childhood stunting leads to stunted earnings potential and stunted economies.

The main outcomes of the event included:

- **The Global Nutrition for Growth Compact.** This was endorsed by 90 governments, companies, civil society organisations and others, to ensure that by 2020 at least 500 million pregnant women and children under two are reached with nutrition interventions; that the number of stunted children reduced by 20 million; and that at least 1.7 million children's lives are saved.
- **International financial commitments** amounting to an additional \$4.2 billion to support direct nutrition programmes and nearly \$20 billion for programmes that can deliver more nutrition results, in agriculture, sanitation and hygiene, and social safety nets.
- On Africa, the event also marked an important step forward for the **New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition** with Benin, Malawi and Nigeria joining the initiative, and a greater focus on responsible investment and promoting women's economic empowerment. In the three new countries, over 70 companies, including 53 African companies, will make new investment commitments worth nearly \$6 billion. The UK is committed to building on this progress and will

continue to support strong African ownership and alignment with CAADP.

The participation of the DG and heads of the other Rome agencies underscored their commitment to tackling what is known as 'hidden hunger'. The DG agreed to share FAO's and his personal expertise by joining a new high-level panel to strengthen approaches to nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

A week after the nutrition event, the UK also hosted one on transparency as part of its G8 priorities. This included a discussion of land transparency where, again, FAO plays an important role. And again FAO underscored its commitment, through the participation of Deputy Director-General Gustafson.

The outcomes of that meeting included 7 African countries launching partnerships to support national implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure – in order to strengthen transparency and capacity in the land sector and promote responsible investment. We are keen to see FAO take on a strategic role as a facilitator in implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

Much of this work highlights not just FAO's leadership, but also the important role the Committee on World Food Security can play. Promoting increased investment in agriculture is critical but needs high standards for investors. We are looking forward to the CFS-led negotiation process on Responsible Agricultural Investment emulating the success of the Voluntary Guidelines.

We value FAO's normative work, including that undertaken under the International Plant Protection Convention and by its governing body, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. Plant health is important to food security, protection of biodiversity and rural livelihoods and we welcome continued core funding for the IPPC and the contribution to FAO's results.

FAO is a diverse organisation and addresses many challenges simultaneously. The UK remains committed to supporting the DG's objective to strengthen its focus and performance, improving delivery of results at global, regional and country level. As we review the priorities of our Multilateral Aid Review, we have been impressed by his sharper focus on FAO's objectives, the increase in transparency and accountability, and a growing emphasis on FAO as a results-based organisation. There are still challenges, particularly ensuring that the changes have maximum impact and undertaking detailed workforce planning to ensure that all posts are filled with the right people and that they have the right skills to deliver their best. The UK is confident that FAO will rise to the challenge: we all need this important organisation and together we will ensure that it succeeds.

Thank you.

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