

MALTA STATEMENT  
*High Level Conference on World Food Security:  
The Challenge of Climate Change and Bioenergy*

*3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008*

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STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR WALTER BALZAN  
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Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Director General

Excellencies

Dear Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

At a time when 850 million are suffering from hunger and when tens of thousands of children die every day due to malnutrition, Malta believes that the convening of this High Level Conference is indeed very timely. The primary aim of this conference is to address the prevailing challenges caused as a consequence of soaring food prices, climate change and bio-energy and to seek solutions for the achievement of world food security. Malta welcomes the initiative of the UN Secretary General in setting up a task force to deal with this enormous phenomenon. It needs hardly be emphasized, however, that the success of the task force is very much dependent on the firm and collective support of the international community.

This conference further aims to renew the commitments undertaken by the international community at the World Food Summit of 1996 and to reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the Millennium

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Development Goals, particularly MDG 1, to halve world poverty and hunger by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

Mainly due to a much higher demand and poor harvest, food prices have increased dramatically worldwide and, unless immediate action is taken, the problem is likely to persist. Moreover, operational costs, including transport costs which are increasing as a consequence of the currently surging energy prices, also contribute towards higher food prices. Compounded by increases in costs of agricultural production, higher food prices are a real threat to the basic right to food. It is augured that the WTO Doha round would achieve a comprehensive and balanced outcome in all areas of negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

The effects of climate change and global warming impact negatively on agriculture by reducing crop yields and by causing loss of soil, water scarcity and drought. Unless action is taken, and taken urgently, climate change will have a disproportionate impact especially on the most vulnerable countries and populations. The international community can contribute effectively to alleviate the situation through the formulation of humanitarian policies, disaster response policies and financial assistance policies; actions which should lead to reduction and mitigation measures.

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The spreading of trans-boundary plant pests, animal diseases and invasive alien aquatic organisms, is yet another challenge that is being faced as a consequence of climate change. Malta concurs with the view that an early warning system, or a rapid response mechanism, should be further developed in order to effectively protect world food security.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been repeatedly argued that bio-fuels are a contributing factor to world food shortage as energy crops can divert food away from mouths into fuel tanks and compete for land which would otherwise be used for food production. The report compiled by the International Institute for Environment and Development, jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization, reveals that only an estimated 1% of the world's arable land is used for bio-fuels, and that this is expected to increase to between 2.5% and 3.8% by 2030. This contradiction demands more in-depth studies to determine the real impact that bio-fuels may have on world food prices. A balanced approach is therefore warranted.

Mr. Chairman,

Soaring food prices, climate change and bio-energy are intrinsically linked and pose a threat to food security worldwide. Moreover, hunger exacerbates health risks and enhances social problems besides potentially

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jeopardizing national peace and security. Therefore sustainable solutions to these problems warrant global and national policies outlining short and long term solutions. Due and serious consideration should be given *inter alia* to increased investment in agricultural activities and to assistance to the most vulnerable and affected regions. The international organisations, particularly including the three Rome based UN agencies, should be encouraged to continue to play a key role in identifying the root causes of the problems and in seeking solutions which are comprehensive and sustainable. In this context Malta is pleased to note the determination of the International community to collectively respond to these new challenges. Malta looks forward to future negotiations leading to a comprehensive and global agreement on climate change.

Mr Chairman,

Many have been the proposals on how to address the soaring food prices. Not few have attempted to identify the root causes of this phenomenon. It is however high time for the international community to express solidarity with the most vulnerable victims of this reality. The time is ripe to translate words into deeds by ensuring that agriculture remains high on the political agendas.

Thank you.