

**Draft Statement for the
ECOSOC Operational Segment Panel on:
“The current economic, food and climate change crisis and their effects on the
achievement of the MDGs: the role of UN system’s support to national efforts”
(15 July, 10:30 am-1:00 pm)**

Chair: Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, Vice-President of ECOSOC

Madam Chair,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Impacts of the Crisis on Food Security and Future Challenges

World hunger is projected to reach an historic high **in 2009 with 1.02 billion people** going hungry every day, according to FAO’s new estimates. A dangerous mix of the global economic slowdown combined with stubbornly high food prices in many countries has pushed some 100 million more people than last year into chronic hunger and poverty, implying that today one in every six human beings does not have access to adequate food. Food prices on international markets have declined from their peaks, but the **global food crisis is not over**. While higher prices help some farmers, especially larger ones with more surplus to sell, it has a serious **adverse effect on the poorest, especially landless and female-headed households**.

The combined effect of the global credit crunch, falling international trade and investment flows, lower remittances and budgetary pressure on development aid are reversing the progress made in combating global poverty and pushing more people into hunger **jeopardizing the achievement of MDGs**.

Climate Change also poses a real challenge to the achievement of MDGs. If agriculture is **to meet the twin challenges** of increased food production and of ecosystem services, there is a need to accelerate the transition to sustainability. Furthermore, **world population is projected to grow** from 6 and a half billion in 2005 to about **9 billion by 2050**, almost entirely in the developing countries. To feed a population of more than 9 billion, **global food production must increase and so must access to food**.

2. FAO is playing a prominent role in responding to the crisis at global and national levels

FAO’s early lead in addressing the food crisis that began in 2007 has made it possible for the Organization to take a lead role in framing the international response to the food crisis in a broad range of fora. We have continued to work for the achievement of the objectives defined in the **Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)** of the UN High-Level Task Force (HLTF), while developing programmes and initiatives under **FAO’s own Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP)**.

I am pleased to mention, that in working towards the achievement of CFA outcomes, the UN has piloted a model of interagency cooperation that is now being highlighted by key partners, such as the European Union, as a model for future cooperative engagement in other areas. Cooperation has been especially close between the Rome-based agencies throughout this initiative with the World Bank being another very active partner.

FAO has also been working together with the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (**NEPAD**) Secretariat, particularly in the framework of Pillar 3 of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (**CAADP**), dedicated to food security. This cooperation model was very effectively demonstrated in the joint deployment of **17 large scale interagency assessments and 41 Rapid Assessments and crop and food supply assessment missions** and also in the development of project proposals for the EUR 1 billion EU Food Facility.

3. Successes

I should note that, although notwithstanding the recent 'food, fuel and financial' crisis, several countries have realized remarkable progress toward the achievement of the hunger reduction goals, including in Africa, Asia and Latin America. FAO has provided support to these countries in their efforts. Just to mention some:

- **Ethiopia**

- Environmental degradation is a key factor challenging food security, community livelihoods and sustainable development in **Ethiopia**. Through **policy support for Sustainable Land Management (SLM)**, FAO is a key partner in the formulation of a 12 years multi-billion Program, known as *Ethiopia Strategic Investment Framework for SLM*. The Organization has conducted projects in Kaffa Zone (SNNPR), in Tigray, Amhara regions and Arsi zone related to watershed management, participatory forest management, land productivity improvement and diversification of incomes with increased production of wild coffee and fruits.
- In the domain of **climate change** various activities are being conducted ranging from promoting natural ecosystems conservation, to sustainable land rangeland management with capacity building in the domain of increasing carbon sequestration through better land care. Best practices for adaptation and mitigation to climate change are being promoted.
- In Tigray and Amhara regions, FAO also supports **mid to long term programmes aimed at improving population's nutritional status**. Activities conducted include animal vaccination, irrigation and sanitation assistance. Poor, female-headed households are provided with packages including chickens, goats/sheep and inputs for a vegetable garden.

- **El Salvador**

- Since 1987 FAO, together with the national institute for agriculture research and extension – CENTA - has been assisting the development of an agroforestry system in the sloping lands with significant results in terms of environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods. **The result is known throughout Central America as "Quesungual system"** and highly effective both in years of excessive rains and hurricanes as in years of drought. The system promotes the association of dispersed trees with the main staples, maize and beans and ensures year round vegetative soil coverage, direct planting and crop rotation. The system has been further developed **since 2004 in the framework of the National Programme for Food Security**, whereby sustainable food production is complemented by specific initiatives to improve food storage through metal silos; water sanitation and household hygiene; food preparation and nutrition education.

- FAO is also assisting technicians from different sectors, Education, Health, Agriculture, Social Welfare to work together within newly established technical committees of food security at departmental and municipal levels.
 - FAO's long experience with successful school garden's activities, associated to school feeding and nutrition education are worth mentioning. **In El Salvador** - as in the neighbouring countries - **the education sector** is playing an active role in promoting an integrated food security approach with small children that represent one of the most vulnerable groups.
- **Dominican Republic**
 - The Government's commitment to food security dates back to 2002 when FAO was asked to assist with the formulation of the **National Program for Food Security** to be entirely financed by the government. Although, activities were limited to the south western regions of Bahoruco and Barahona where more severe conditions for food insecurity persist, successful results were obtained particularly in : **improved water management; small livestock; capacity building; improved productivity with crop and small animals** and the transformation and marketing of agriculture products have resulted in a significant increase in the average income of some 2000 rural households directly associated with the project.
 - Following **the successful results** in the south west provinces of Bahoruco and Barahona the government is now keen to expand the food security program to the northwest frontier region with Haiti, where rural population is confronted with similar problems due to fragile environment, poverty and food insecurity.
 - A dairy project started by FAO in **Kabul and four Afghan provinces** has proved so successful that the 1 600 farming families taking part have seen their incomes increase fivefold, from \$130 to \$650 a year. And as it's women who do most of the work involved, they keep 95 percent of the money they earn. Dairy farmers and their families are not the only ones benefiting.

While many more Afghans now have access to fresh, healthy milk products, the success of the dairy schemes has also made it much more profitable for farmers to grow fodder/seed such as lucerne, which can return profits of \$900 per ha, perhaps even competing with illicit crop production.

The success of the project has stimulated the World Bank, the Government of Italy and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to substantially invest in dairy development in Afghanistan.
 - At a time when more people than ever are going hungry worldwide, **Ghana has been successful in fighting the trend**, but continues to face new challenges. Based on FAO statistics, the estimated number of undernourished people in Ghana dropped steadily from 5.4 million people in the 1990-92 baseline period to 3.0 million in 1995-97, followed by a further decrease to 1.9 million in 2003-05, though child undernutrition is not improving.

The financial crisis, rising inflation, food price increases and climate-related shocks, such as floods and droughts, threaten to keep Ghana's success from reaching more people in the country. At the peak of the lean season in June/July, WFP and FAO will join forces to enhance food security and nutritional well-being in the three northern regions of Ghana through the joint UN Trust Fund for Human Security, a joint UN

programme against malnutrition and a recovery operation targeting approximately 500 000 people

Also the **UN system can successfully work together** in the field to improve food security:

- **In Mozambique** which is one of the pilot countries in the “Delivering as One” initiative, FAO is participating in several joint programmes. The UN Joint Programme on “**Building Commodity Value Chains and Market Linkages for Farmers’ Associations**” has been very successfully implemented jointly by WFP, FAO and IFAD. The programme aims at increasing the incomes of smallholders in rural areas and enhancing their livelihoods, in line with the Government objectives for rural and economic development. The relatively small number of participating agencies has allowed the agencies to genuinely plan, work and report together, each bringing their unique comparative advantage to support the project.
- **In Laos** the UN Country Team has established an inter-agency task force comprised of WHO, FAO, UNICEF, the WB, the African Development Bank and the Office of the Resident Coordinator to help the Government to control and to prepare for an Avian and Human Influenza epidemic. FAO, based on its comparative advantages played a major role in this task force and together with the Government, other UN agencies and various NGOs prepared the National Avian Influenza Control and Preparedness Plan 2006-2010 for combating HPAI.

What more needs to be done

We can say without any hesitation that the fight against hunger remains one of the greatest **challenges in achieving the Millennium Development Goals**.

Today, the **world’s attention is fully focussed on the financial and economic crisis**, which increases unemployment and deepens poverty. It also contributes to the further marginalization of the one billion people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in the world. The food insecurity crisis will have long-lasting effects on the poor and requires no less attention than the financial crisis. The economic, political and social ramifications of prolonged global food insecurity also represent a threat to world peace and security, as was manifested in 2007 and 2008 by food riots in different countries in the world. FAO is therefore also a partner in the UN initiative on the economic and financial crisis.

The **l’Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security** and the agreement of the **G8** to mobilize **\$20 billion over three years** for a comprehensive strategy focussing on sustainable agricultural development signal an encouraging shift of policy and priority attention.

We have estimated that there is a need for about 30 billion dollar investment every year in order to deal with the food security problem. As of June this year, FAO has mobilized USD 385 million for the soaring food price initiative.

In view of the challenges facing world food security, a **World Food Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security will be held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome from 16 to 18 November 2009**. The objectives of the Summit would be to reach broad consensus on the rapid and definitive eradication of hunger from the world, including the

development of relevant policies and a more coherent and efficient system of governance with regard to World Food Security.

In concluding, I wish to stress FAO's commitment to eliminate hunger and find long term solutions to the problems of food insecurity, so that everyone in the world is ensured the most basic of human rights – the right to food, and thus to existence.

Thank you for your attention.