

17 October 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Food Day and the International Day for the Eradication of
Poverty**

This year, the United Nations will observe World Food Day and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the same day. In doing so, we acknowledge that the two significant challenges - eradicating poverty and ending hunger - are inter-linked, and must be given high priority on national and international agendas. Leaders of the world, in their Millennium Declaration, affirmed freedom from hunger as a priority, confirming the World Food Summit's undertaking to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger by the year 2015. They also committed themselves to taking effective action against poverty by reducing by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) tells us that the world produces enough food to feed all its inhabitants; yet some 20,000 people die each day from hunger-related causes, and six million children under the age of five die each year of hunger. Currently, an estimated one-sixth of the world's population is malnourished and almost fifty per cent of children in South-Central Asia and Sub-Saharan African are underweight. To meet the Millennium Development Goal of reducing hunger therefore, we would have to decrease by thirty-five million each year the 840 million people - 799 million of them in the developing world - for whom hunger is a persistent part of their daily lives.

If we are to effectively address poverty in all its dimensions and if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals, serious challenges will have to be overcome. A more dynamic poverty eradication strategy that would place ending poverty at the core of national development policies is urgently needed. However, while it may be true that, eradicating poverty is the primary responsibility of each nation, strengthened international co-operation and assistance is necessary to support efforts at national level. Notwithstanding, there has been modest progress in the fight against poverty,

A key area in which collective responsibility has to be exercised if we are to reduce poverty and hunger now is in the mobilization of resources. The World Bank estimates that the cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals is likely to require at least an additional \$50 billion a year, over and above the resources provided by developing countries themselves. With only 12 more years to go, we could be running out of time if the resources are not provided now to enable us to meet the Goal of halving the proportion of people suffering from poverty and hunger by 2015.

It is time for us to take action, to make good our promises and to fulfill our commitments. We have a moral obligation to join the International Alliance against Hunger, the theme of this year's World Food Day. Such an alliance of endeavour will better position people and nations to feed themselves. It should ensure the required international commitment to close the gap between rich and poor countries and to eliminate barriers to trade, increase market access and enhance the productive capacity of countries, particularly developing countries, to provide food for the hungry and to achieve growth and sustainable development. Above all, we must work to ensure the human dignity that comes with a life free from hunger and poverty.