

18 October 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
on World Food Day and the Launch of the International Year of the  
Potato**

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Jacques Diouf for inviting me here today. It is a great pleasure to attend this meeting to mark the Observance of World Food Day. Over 150 countries around the world will observe it this year. Today is also the beginning of the International Year of the Potato.

The Right to Food is the theme of 2007 World Food Day. This is an implicit recognition of the important role of human rights in eradicating hunger and poverty.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights first recognized the right to food as a basic human right. Next year we will celebrate its 60th anniversary. Yet, this basic human right remains to be realized for 854 million people.

We clearly have to do more to address the issue of hunger and access to food. As a human race, we have the resources and know-how to adequately feed every human being on the planet. The Millennium Development Goals embody this responsibility.

Through the MDGs we have committed ourselves to reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. We are now at the midpoint between the adoption of the MDGs and the target date to achieve them.

So far, our collective record is mixed.

If I single out the situation of children, according to the United Nations MDG Report for 2007, child hunger is declining in all regions, but meeting the target will require us to accelerate progress.

The greatest proportions of hungry children continue to be found in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Poor progress in these regions means that it is unlikely that the global target will be met on time.

If current trends continue, the world will miss the 2015 target by 30 million children who will have been going hungry. This is very concerning. It means that these children will not be able to develop their full potential.

It is imperative that all stakeholders meet their commitments, especially commitments to significantly increase official development assistance. Developing countries also have promises to keep. If both sides live up to the compact enough resources would be available to achieve the MDGs on time.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The humble potato also has a role that we shouldn't underestimate.

Potatoes have made a great contribution to human nutrition and food security. I thus commend Peru for their initiative to launch the International Year of the Potato. It provides us with an important opportunity to focus global attention on this primary source of energy for more than a billion of the world's poor.

The great indigenous civilization of South America first cultivated the potato. I would like to read you a brief Inca prayer about the potato.

"O Creator! Thou who givest life to all things and hast made men that they may live, and multiply. Multiply also the fruits of the earth, the potatoes and other food that thou hast made, that men may not suffer from hunger and misery."

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We need to create the conditions to promote human dignity, empower the poor and encourage them to actively participate in realizing their right to food.

As we approach the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, we must recommit to achieving all of the MDGs. We must also ensure that the many millions still suffering from hunger, malnutrition and social exclusion enjoy the right of food.

Thank you very much.