



**Contribution to the preparation of the
Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security**

A Call for Coherence and Responsibility

Realizing the right to food by improving global governance

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Two weeks ahead of the World Summit on Food Security, the negotiations on the Draft Declaration of the Summit are entering their final stage. What is at stake is our ability to take the necessary steps towards a global food system that will make decisive progress towards realizing the human right to adequate food and building our resilience against the risk of future economic shocks and increasing volatility of food prices.

The Declaration should be coherent, ambitious and unambiguous on five issues: the right to food, governance, sustainability, trade, and the strengthening of international cooperation.

1. Rights. *Grounding the Declaration in the right to food*

The draft Declaration affirms the central role of the right to food in its list of principles. This is vital, because it signals the need to move beyond approaches to food security that emphasize only the need to increase aggregate levels of production, towards approaches that include the importance of increasing incomes of the poorest and of removing the obstacles to access to food by the most vulnerable groups. The call for the urgent implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security is also to be welcomed.

Five years ago, the Guidelines were unanimously approved by the governments within the FAO Council. But their implementation has been uneven across countries, and all States should be supported in their attempts to make further progress in this direction. We can build on what has been achieved already. Dozens of countries have included this right in their constitutions. In Brazil, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Venezuela, national framework laws have been adopted, based upon its principles. National strategies based upon the Voluntary Guidelines are increasingly being seen as an indispensable component of policies aiming at the achievement of food security. In my capacity as Special Rapporteur, I shall in the future collect such good practices on a systematic basis, in order to accelerate collective learning by imitation. Experience has shown that the ‘twin tracks’ of feeding the hungry through emergency support schemes and of promoting agricultural and rural development can be ineffective at achieving the objective of food security for all unless guided by the right to adequate food and unless based on the principles of participation, accountability, and non-discrimination (Principle 3).

2. Governance. *A renewed Committee on World Food Security*

I warmly welcome the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The global food price crisis of 2007-8 has highlighted the need for improvements to the global governance of food security, and this reform is the single most important achievement of the international community to the crisis, along with the renewal of pledges to reinvest significantly in agriculture and rural development. As a member of the contact group on the reform of the CFS, I have been struck by the tremendous energy and goodwill of governments and international agencies in shaping a renewed CFS with an innovative role. The CFS should adopt a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, establish goals and benchmarks, promote transparency and accountability, and monitor the application of the Right to Food Guidelines and the progress towards the fulfillment of States’ and international organizations’ commitments. Country-led processes must have a central role; and the full participation of representatives of small food producers in the debates must be promoted both at country level and in the CFS itself. Governments should be encouraged to submit to the CFS national plans against hunger and malnutrition developed in participatory fashion and including clear benchmarks and timelines to mobilize all governmental agencies and enhance accountability. Only through such national strategies can the multidimensionality of hunger and malnutrition be addressed adequately: food security should not be seen only as the concern of the departments of agriculture.

► It is of the utmost importance that the Declaration confirms the central role of a renewed CFS in ensuring policy coherence towards achieving global food security. As I suggested in Rome in May, the CFS should become the multilateral body for coordination, learning and monitoring. Coordination is seriously needed because policies that influence food security emanate not only from all countries, but also from different organizations with different mandates. Having these policies managed at the

international level in several fora that do not have a mandate to promote food security is anomalous and in some cases may lead to results that are dysfunctional : States should not be facing a set of conflicting expectations or incentives from various partners or organizations.

► In this respect, the Declaration should make it clear that the multi-donor trust fund which, at its Summit of 24-25 September, the G-20 called for the World Bank to set up, should be administered in accordance with the global strategic framework agreed upon within the CFS, consistent with the view that the reformed CFS should constitute ‘the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a range of committed stakeholders’, as noted in the draft Declaration (Strategic Objectives, para. 8). Monitoring is needed for accountability: pledges that are made should be kept, and the commitment of each State to work towards improving food security should translate into concrete measures and progress that is measurable. Learning, finally, can result from pooling the results achieved at national and regional level, into a multilateral framework that encourages cooperation.

3. Sustainability. *The right orientation for the reinvestment in agriculture.*

I welcome the strong emphasis of the draft Declaration on the sustainability of agricultural investments. Such investments should aim not only at raising productivity, but also at increasing incomes of smallholders and at mitigating climate change. In this respect, I commend the reference in the draft Declaration of a reference to the need for investments in ‘rural infrastructure and support services, including but not limited to roads, storage, irrigation, communication infrastructure, education, technical support and health’ (Principle 3). Policies supporting private goods – such as input subsidies – have short-term effects, but it is the increases in public goods that benefit the most vulnerable; and have both short-term and long-term effects for the whole society.

► Consistent with this commitment to sustainable reinvestments in agriculture, the Declaration should reflect the new consensus on the potential of agroecological farming approaches, which has been stated in 2008 and 2009 reports by IAASTD, UNEP, FAO and UNCTAD. It could refer to the need to mainstream agroforestry, low external-input agriculture, water-harvesting systems and other peer-reviewed sustainable farming techniques. The Declaration should also recognize farmers as partners in the reinvestment in agriculture. As proven by many programmes, including participatory plant breeding, participatory processes that put small farmers in the driver’s seat and recognize their important role as innovators can combine the best of science with the best experience of food producers, with a tremendous impact on food security at local level.

4. Trade. *Trade rules promoting food security and the right to food.*

I welcome the commitment to improving the functioning of domestic, regional and international markets and ensuring equitable access for all, especially smallholders and women farmers from developing countries ; as well as the support to special measures for developing countries’ small farmers aimed at enabling them to compete on a more equal footing on international markets. I also support the view that ‘a timely and ambitious, comprehensive and balanced conclusion of the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations [...] would be important to improving food security’ (Principle 3).

At the same time, I note that this statement begs the question of the relationship between trade and food security, although such a relationship is controversial and often not well understood. While trade liberalization redistributes global economic welfare, there is little evidence to show trade liberalization directly leads to improved food security outcomes. In particular, well functioning markets do not necessarily lead to improve food security outcomes for small producers unless other complementary social and economic policies are in place. On the contrary, grain traders, food processors and other transnational companies capture the bulk of the added value in most globalized food chains, and trade liberalization leads to increased concentration of the production of food, when de-concentration is what is needed in the current situation. The realization of the right to food requires to strengthen the ability of smallholders to produce. If this is not done, large-scale agricultural producers, which have better access to information, credit, and can easier meet standards, volume and regularity constraints, will further benefit the situation. Increased rural exodus and deeper dualization of agriculture will result. The end result would be less food security, not more.

The global food economy of 2009 is very different from the one in 2001 when the Doha round began. Yet, the draft agriculture modalities within the WTO negotiations are premised on the old paradigm of falling prices and are ill-prepared to address present agricultural policy challenges. Considering WTO negotiations take an increasingly longer time to conclude, there is a danger for the international community to be hamstrung for decades by trade rules based on the problems of the 1990s, not the 2010s and beyond. In particular, we are witnessing the end of the post-WWII decline in food prices, and the World Bank, OECD, and independent economic assessments of the current Doha deal all predict higher cereal prices that will adversely impact low income, net-food importing developing countries. Recalling that higher food prices led to 1 billion food insecure people, there is a real danger the current deal on the table may arguably worsen the global food security situation.

► In that context, caution is needed to ensure a completed trade deal does not come at the expense of the global food security. Calling for a simple conclusion of the Doha Round may be inadequate. The November WTO Ministerial should be used as an opportunity to examine how the Doha Round could be made coherent with achieving food security goals. States should use the opportunity of the upcoming WTO ministerial to undertake a systemic review of the Doha Work Programme to ensure coherence with multilateral efforts to eradicate hunger in half by 2025 and the recent structural changes in the global food economy as well as climate change. The Declaration of the World Food Summit could indicate the relevance of such a review process.

5. Strengthening multilateralism. *Making up for the gaps in international cooperation (agrofuels, speculation and volatility, climate change)*

► The Declaration should go further to tackle some of the most pressing issues. The sudden growth in demand and production of agrofuels, encouraged by subsidies and tax incentives in rich countries, were a major factor behind increasing the number of hungry people to above a billion people : although agrofuels could contribute to development under certain conditions, their expansion should be more closely monitored in order to ensure that their negative impacts will not outweigh their benefits. There is an urgent need to reach a consensus at the international level on this issue, and it is in the very interest of the countries with a comparative advantage in this area to promote a multilateral approach in this respect. The fight against speculation on global agricultural commodity markets should also be strengthened. As confirmed by a recent U.S. Senate report, speculation by commodity index funds drove up wheat prices and other commodities during the first semester of 2008. The mutualization of national and regional food reserves enjoys strong support among certain groups of countries at regional level. Such initiatives should be supported and expanded at international level. Provided they are managed in conditions that ensure both transparency and accountability, the establishment of food reserves – including a strategic food reserve to answer the immediate needs of the World Food Programme in situations of emergency – could minimize price volatility and allow food producers to be guaranteed equitable prices.

► On these three issues, the draft Declaration calls for more studies. This is a missed opportunity. Accountability starts now: the Declaration should include an agenda with clear deadlines for achievement of an international consensus on these issues. The disconnection of the food security and climate change agendas falls in the same category: States should ensure that food security and climate change policies are harmonised and that the outcomes of the negotiations on both issues shall be mutually supportive.

Coherence. *Call for an eco-friendly summit*

In addition to these five issues which should be central in the Declaration, a coherent approach to escape the global food crisis should start with food served at the Summit itself. I have personally called upon the FAO to organize the first eco-friendly summit. In the recent past, World Food Summits have been pictured by mass media as gatherings of Heads of States enjoying luxurious feasts, with a huge detrimental impact for the public perception of these Summits. Just three weeks ahead of the Copenhagen Conference, the World Summit on Food Security could and should send another image. An eco-friendly Summit would promote responsible and sustainable modes of consumption, by

featuring simplicity in meals, responsible meat consumption, seasonal products and possibly fair trade products. Italy has plenty of such products.

This single decision would send a powerful message to all delegates and, through the media, to citizens. It would draw the attention to the shifts in the modes of consumption that are needed in rich countries, if we want to meet the challenge of feeding the planet in the future. As Professor Pachauri, the President of the IPCC, rightly emphasizes, our current meat-rich diets are simply unsustainable if we want to avoid the major climatic disruptions that would affect our food security.

The World Summit on Food Security must result in swift, significant progress in the war against hunger. The global food price crisis creates a historical opportunity for decision-makers to match intent with practice and unite their efforts towards the full realization of the right to adequate food. To achieve this collective goal, the Summit must result in purposeful multilateral cooperation and strengthened global governance of food security, firmly rooted in prioritizing the needs of food insecure peoples in a sustainable manner.

Olivier De Schutter was appointed the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food in March 2008 by the United Nations Human Rights Council. He is independent from any government or organization, and he reports to the Human Rights Council and to the UN General Assembly. For more on the work of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, visit www.srfood.org or www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/food/index.htm.