



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Economic and Social Council
Substantive Session for 2008**

**General debate
for the
High-level Segment**

New York, 2 July 2008

Mr. President,

This year's High-Level Segment calls world leaders to reflect upon the progress made in achieving the United Nations development agenda and the urgency to address the developmental needs of rural communities. The ongoing food crisis, as well as the economic downturn in some developed countries, highlights the importance and relevance of our theme.

The food crisis has impacted all societies. In some places it manifests itself in scarcity of food with consequent malnourishment and starvation; in others it appears in the form of higher prices for families trying to provide for their basic needs. Despite its different manifestations, it stems from a series of concomitant causes: shortsighted economic, agricultural and energy policies, which cause a clash between the increasing demand for food and insufficient production of food, and the increase in financial speculations on commodities, the uncontrollable rise of oil prices and adverse climate conditions.

While today's debate will appropriately focus on the structural defects of the world economy and on the causes of the emergency, we must work to ensure that this discussion is accompanied by immediate and effective action. Failure to do so will deem our meeting as a mere rhetorical exercise and avoidance of responsibilities.

Mr. President,

While this year marks the 60th anniversary of the UDHR, the world-wide food crisis threatens the attainment of the primary right of every person to be free from starvation. In this light, the Resolution on the *Right to Food*, recently adopted by the Human Rights Council, emphasizes correctly the obligation of States, with the assistance of the international community, to make every effort to meet the food needs of their populations through measures which respect human rights and the rule of law.

At the outset, action must be taken to assist those suffering from malnutrition and starvation. It is difficult to think that, in a world which spends over 1.3 trillion dollars each year in armaments, life-saving funds to help people in need are unavailable. A sincere will to tackle the issue must be accompanied by the necessary action, not simply words and intentions.

Going forward, the initial economic emergency aid must be accompanied by a concerted effort on the part of all to invest in long-term and sustainable agriculture programs at the local and international levels. The last twenty-five years have seen considerable progress in reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty. Unless we reinvest in agriculture, however, the progress that has been achieved through hard work and dedication risks being lost. To this end, agrarian reforms in developing countries must be sped up in order to give small-holder farmers the tools for increasing production in a sustainable manner as well as access to local and global markets.

Moreover, agricultural and environmental policies must walk the path of reason and reality in order to balance the need for food production with the need to be good stewards of the earth. The current food scarcity reemphasizes the urgency to explore new energy supplies which do not pit the right to food against other needs.

My delegation welcomes the recommendations of the recent *High-level Conference on World Food Security* held in Rome at the FAO. They offer a practical guide on how to deal with the short and long term consequences of the food crisis and give guidance on how to prevent it from recurring in the future.

Mr. President,

The twentieth century suffered in a tragic way from the effects of people and governments looking only within their national borders and from lack of consultation and multilateral cooperation. The present crisis is an opportunity for the global community to come together and take responsibility for our neighbor.

Thank you, Mr. President.