



# **The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations**

**Statement by  
Ambassador Hjálmar W. Hannesson  
Permanent Representative of Iceland  
to the United Nations**

**at the**

**Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)**

**Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis**

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**Iceland**

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I thank you for organizing this timely event on the food crisis. High food prices are a matter of extreme anxiety in many countries – a matter of life and death. As often in times of crisis, it is women, in particular mothers, who are in the front line in trying to feed families.

A co-coordinated response is needed from the international community and I thank the Secretary General for swiftly establishing a Task Force to create a comprehensive plan for international response.

There is a wide range of measures to be taken and all Governments will need to take appropriate actions. Iceland is ready to do its part. The World Food Programme plays a crucial role in mobilizing resources for the response. The Government of Iceland has responded to the extraordinary appeal by the World Food Programme to meet emergency needs and will continue to follow events.

Gender equality and the active role of women in agriculture is of paramount importance in fighting the food crises. The Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) has cooperated with its partner countries promoting equal rights and active participation of women in the economy, thus strengthening the local food security. We have as well increased our support of the work of UNIFEM.

In the long term we must look for sustainability. Our present food production and distribution systems are creaking under a massive increase in demand and added stress from climate change. We must look for solutions which are sustainable – quick fixes are not available.

Vital to sustainable agriculture is the fight against land degradation, made worse by climate change. Iceland has over 100 years of experience in reclaiming land from erosion. We have concentrated on bringing together expertise from around the world through international conferences and will be launching a UN University programme on soil technology.

I would like to mention briefly the importance of sustainable fisheries in this context. Ninety-five per cent of those who live from fisheries are in the developing world and a billion people depend on fisheries for their main intake of protein. With increased demand for food, it becomes more important than ever before to make sure that fishing is conducted in a sustainable manner.

The UN University Fisheries Training Programmes in Iceland reflect our emphasis on the importance of providing training and sharing technology for sustainable fisheries, which can provide increased the food supply for some of the poorest.

Enhancing food security and increasing food production has been at the core of Iceland's bilateral development cooperation, through the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA), which has concentrated on capacity-building projects in southern Africa, Asia, and Central America, mainly in the field of fisheries.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we face a challenge and we have to take responsible and timely actions. Additional measures by the Government are currently under consideration.