

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Claudia Blum
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ECOSOC Special Meeting
on Global Food Crisis

New York, 21 May 2008

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Mr. President,

Allow me to recognise the initiative of convening this meeting, which highlights the relevance of ECOSOC as a central forum for discussing emerging issues of primary global importance in the economic and social fields.

Colombia would like to present the following considerations with relation to the theme of this meeting:

1. The food problem is of a complex and multidimensional nature. The various causes identified up to date, their interrelations, and the simultaneous incidence of economic, social and environmental phenomena, present significant challenges for understanding and addressing the situation in all its scope and depth.
2. It is therefore essential that the international community—including our Organization—favour a comprehensive analysis, on a technical and objective basis. Bearing in mind the social, and even humanitarian, impacts of the situation, it is necessary to avoid politicized criteria and to deploy efforts in order to identify the cooperation actions that are needed. To that end, we encourage further promoting spaces for discussion as well as taking advantage of the General Assembly setting.
3. Colombia welcomes the Task Force established under the Secretary-General's leadership. We expect that the UN agencies and other institutions represented on that team contribute in promoting the comprehensive and broad response that is required at the international level. Likewise, we expect the establishment of communication mechanisms, in order to allow for Member States to provide inputs and adequately follow up to that work.

4. The food crisis provides further evidence of the importance of addressing the imbalances of the international trading system. In the context of the Doha Round, advancing towards commitments for the reduction of protectionist measures and agricultural subsidies by developed countries generates a greater sense of urgency. These imbalances have notably discouraged agricultural investment and development in developing countries. Similarly, the establishment of subsidies and export restrictions in response to the current problem could generate additional inefficiencies in international trade, which can result in higher long-term costs.
5. It is as much of a priority to analyse aspects related to the growing global energy demand, as well as the impact of the increase in oil prices on food prices. That increase, which in the last 7 years has been close to 400%, has affected the costs of transportation and other basic inputs for food production.
6. Consequently, there are pressing reasons to accelerate the bid of the international community in favour of renewable energy alternatives. In this perspective, generalizations regarding the production and use of biofuels can be misleading. A specific evaluation, without predetermined conclusions, that takes into account national circumstances and the positive experiences of countries where production is carried out in harmony with food security and environmental protection policies is required. In Colombia, for instance, the production stemming from crops, such as sugar cane and palm oil, has not entailed the replacement of fertile land for food production, nor reductions in the national agroalimentary supply. On the contrary, biofuels production has dynamized the agricultural sector, generating thousands of new rural jobs; stimulating investment, research and technological development; and promoting higher productivity in under-utilised lands. Additionally, it has represented advancement in terms of energy supply, diversification and efficiency; as well as environmental benefits, given the implementation of policies and legislation on massification of biofuels use.
7. Another factor that deserves careful consideration is the marked increase in global food demand. This trend demonstrates the importance of giving a renewed impetus to agricultural sector growth, especially in developing countries; through cooperation actions such as capacity-building, technology transfer and increased international market access.
8. It is also vital to give more attention to the impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity and agroalimentary supply. The increasing incidence of natural disasters worsens the situation even more. It is necessary, under the framework of existing mechanisms, to intensify international support for the implementation of national policies on agricultural sector adaptation, particularly, in developing countries.

Mr. President,

Allow me to finish by reiterating Colombia's commitment to the evaluation of the food problem and the joint search for effective cooperation strategies and viable solutions. We are confident that the ongoing deliberations will translate into specific recommendations inspired on a collaborative approach and mutual benefit.

Thank you.