

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz,
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt
to the United Nations

Global Food Crisis
ECOSOC Special Meeting

21 May, 2008

Thank you Mr. President for holding this timely and highly important meeting on the global food crisis.

The past few months have witnessed an unprecedented leap in essential commodity food prices, resulting in the doubling and sometimes more than doubling of prices of some of these commodities, such as wheat and rice. These developments have grave consequences on the development efforts of developing countries and on their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Accordingly, the international community needs to act swiftly on this issue, as its inability to address this steady increase in food prices throughout the past three years, represents one of the underlying causes that have led to the unfolding of this current crisis.

Moreover, this crisis should be addressed in a comprehensive manner and not in isolation of other contributing factors such as:

- climate change, and its destructive effects on agricultural production.
- Increased edible crops-based bio-fuel production, and its impact, as a supply-side constraint, on the volume of agricultural production.
- The negative effects of trade distorting agricultural subsidies by developed countries on agricultural producers in developing countries, particularly in light of the continued impasse in negotiations in the WTO on the Doha Development Agenda and the inability to reach an agreement establishing rules and disciplines with regard to agriculture.

It is also equally important to note that the increased lack of interest in the development of the agriculture sector in developing countries throughout the past few years, particularly on the side of international financial institutions, also constitutes a serious factor that has contributed immensely to our current crisis, and needs to be reversed, especially in terms of the agriculture sector's share of investments and ODA. Furthermore, while it is vital to address this crisis in a holistic manner, achieving food security represents the more immediate and fundamental goal (MDG 1), which directly impacts achieving the other MDGs.

Mr. President,

Many international initiatives aimed at addressing this crisis have been put forward, and many others are soon to be announced. At the time we welcome such initiatives, we believe their value will depend on the political will to push for their actual implementation, for we have stood witness to many commitments in the economic and social fields that remain without any actual implementation.

In the same context, we look forward to the outcome of today's meeting to contribute to the High-level Meeting in the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome with a view to help mobilize international support towards this issue and to come up with concrete and comprehensive plan of action. We also believe that increased coordination and coherence between all these initiatives and meetings is crucial.

Additionally, this crisis requires concrete policy actions at the national, regional, and international levels, while bearing in mind the need for policy space for developing countries, and the need as many initiatives have referred, for actions to be defined on an immediate, medium and long term basis, since most speculations point to a continued rise in food commodity prices during the upcoming years. The Secretary General's initiative announced in Bern a few weeks ago is a good example in this regard, as it calls for an immediate response of providing 775 million dollars called for by the WFP, and 1.7 billion dollars called for by the FAO for seeds, fertilizer and agricultural inputs to boost production, while also working for defining medium and long term responses.

In this regard, we congratulate the Secretary General for his decision to establish the Task Force to present a comprehensive plan of action during the High-Level Conference in Rome. We stress the vital need for close intergovernmental follow-up and coordination through the General Assembly and ECOSOC with the Task Force, so as to ensure the necessary guidance by the full membership of the Organization.

In this regard we support the convening of a high level debate in the General Assembly in the High level segment of the 63rd session to take stock of actions taken and follow their implementation.

I thank you Mr. President.