

7 July 2008

**2008 ECOSOC Substantive Session
Coordination Segment**

Panel discussion on “Working towards food security: the UN system approach”

**New York, 7 July 2008
4-6 pm**

**Introductory remarks by
H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima
Vice-President of ECOSOC**

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to open the first panel discussion of the 2008 coordination segment. The panel will focus on the theme “Working towards food security: the UN system approach”.

The sharp rise of food prices in recent months, which had negative impacts on millions of people around the world, has brought to the foreground the issue of global food security. The urgency of the problem and its far-reaching implications has forced affected countries and the international community: a) to call for substantial increases in emergency aid; and b) to re-think their policies to ensure food security in the long-term.

Experts agree that food prices are not likely to return to levels the world has grown accustomed to. There is thus a clear sense of urgency to identify and promote new and more effective approaches to food security.

There is a broad-based consensus on the need to increase food production and supply to prevent immediate starvation and food insecurity in the future. Questions remain on the specific policies to pursue this in an effective and sustainable manner.

Several initiatives have already been launched by the UN system to promote a unified approach to face the crisis, from immediate to long-term needs. These are embodied in the outcome of the Berne meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

The root causes of the looming food crisis and food insecurity, however, run deep. Changing consumption patterns in emerging economies, growing world population, limited land resources, and climate change, are all factors that are here to stay. In

addition, there are policy distortions and manipulation of markets that have exacerbated the crisis. Increasing land and agricultural productivity is becoming a major priority for both rich and poor countries to ensure their food security and reduce future exposure to global fluctuations of food and commodity prices. It has become apparent that in a world of scarce resources and increasing needs, failing to promote agricultural productivity will run the risk of further increasing world's inequalities.

The High-Level Conference on World Food Security held in June stressed that effective approaches to food security will require embracing a longer-term perspective and involving a broad range of actors to ensure equitable and sustainable food security. The international community and the UN system will need to gear up to support new approaches to food security and to help low income-food deficit countries to develop long-term strategies to tackle this problem.

This panel is an excellent opportunity to examine some of these issues and challenges and identify ways in which the UN system can help addressing them effectively. It is my great pleasure to welcome all the panelists. I now give the floor to Mr. Stelzer who will introduce the panelists and moderate the discussion. Mr. Stelzer you have the floor.