# Special Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) of the General Assembly on Food Security and Nutrition: Scaling up the Global Response

ECOSOC Chamber, February 14th, 2013

## Joint Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chairperson of the Economic and Financial Committee

The opening included remarks by His Excellency Ambassador Néstor Osorio (Colombia), President of the Economic and Social Council; His Excellency Ambassador George Wilfred Talbot (Guyana), Chair of the Second Committee of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly; and Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (via video link). The panelists included His Excellency Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Agriculture of Guyana; Mr. Amadou Allahoury Diallo, High Commissioner of the 3N Initiative "Nigeriens feeding Nigeriens", Office of the President of the Niger (via video link); Mr. Jonathan Shrier, Special Representative on Global Food Security, United States; Ms. Loretta Dormal Marino, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission; and Professor Isobel Pollock, President and Chief Executive, Institution of Mechanical Engineers. The panel presentations were followed by interventions by three discussants, namely, Mr. Jos Verbeek, Lead Economist and Manager, Global Monitoring Report, World Bank; Ms. Ellen Gustafson, Member of the Advisory Board, Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition and Ms. Debra A. Jones, Director and United Nations Representative in New York, Save the Children.

### Presentations and interactive dialogue

Bringing an end to the hunger that affects nearly 870 million women, men and children worldwide was considered to be one of the most urgent challenges the world faces. As the rising incomes and a growing population put pressure for more and more nutritious food, climate change and natural disasters continue to threaten food production. Barriers to other types of security, related to energy, resource and trade inequities, must also be addressed as they are closely related to food security. The competition between food and biofuel production for land was highlighted. As developing countries are often more acutely affected, they need to be better-equipped to address issues of climate change adaptation and mitigation. Even the food-secure Guyana has been forced to address the issue of climate security, dealing with both droughts and floods (sometimes within the same year). The United States focused on sustaining the productivity and resilience of farmers in the United States during droughts in 2012.

The relationship between food security and equity was raised — hunger was not an issue of abundance of food; enough food was produced to feed everyone. In this regard, there is a need to mitigate risks for the most vulnerable communities in order to build resilience. Addressing global food price volatility and improving markets transparency and access were mentioned as key

priorities; strengthening and supporting the international governance of food security was also raised. The European Common Agricultural Policy, for example, reflects the need to guarantee sustainable agricultural production (both economically and environmentally), territorially balanced and avoiding impacts on others, especially on the more vulnerable, in the long term. Land governance and secure access to land were considered to be prerequisites for food security and higher productivity of the agricultural sector, in particular for the most vulnerable groups. Interventions could include the promotion of social safety nets—for example, household kits with seeds and fertilizer and assistance with access to water and chickens/goats/sheep. Preliminary impacts of such social programmes have resulted in a lessoning of the effects of harvest shortages that would have typically resulted in famine. Niger's 3N initiative focused on creating an enabling environment by focusing on increasing production, increasing access to water and helping small-holder farmers, mostly women, to diversify their crop production. The initiative also launched a campaign to change behaviour to address malnutrition. Small-holder farmers, in particular women farmers, needed to be supported through increased access to markets, credit, seeds and fertilizers. Giving women equal access to agricultural resources would increase agricultural production by around 30 per cent.

The important role of the Committee on World Food Security as the cornerstone of the new global governance system on food security was emphasized. It was considered as one of the most inclusive international platforms for food security, with substantive involvement of the private sector and civil society. The Committee's timely global discussion on "Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment" was considered to be a key step in promoting investment in agriculture that respects human rights, livelihoods and natural resources. While large-scale investments might offer opportunities, they also required good governance to protect the rights of local communities and to avoid natural resource degradation. Some speakers called for a closer relationship between the Committee and the Economic and Social Council. The role of the United Nations system in supporting the global governance of food system, including through the work of the United Nations High-level Task Force on Global Food Security and the Zero Hunger Challenge, was also highlighted.

The issue of nutrition —as being distinct from food security/food supply— was raised. Discussions around the topic of nutrition suggested that nutritional security is more than just an issue of the availability of calories or food supply; rather its main focus is the amount of micronutrients present in food. There was also warning against the conflation of the terms food security/nutrition/nutritional security and it was emphasized that the terminology in line with the framework for the Committee on World Food Security should be used.

In many developed countries, inappropriate food and sedentary lifestyles were resulting in overweight and obesity-related health problems. Consumers needed to have the knowledge and be empowered to take responsibility for their nutrition. In this regard, the European Union had developed a robust policy on food labelling, enabling consumers to make informed choices for a healthy diet.

Relatively little attention has been paid to nutrition by the international community. Food supply and nutritional outcomes are interrelated but have different manifestations across countries;

importing countries face different challenges than exporting countries, as do low versus high-productivity countries.

The issue of malnutrition -and child malnutrition in particular- must be more fully recognized as a global challenge. One in two children is malnourished, and the first 1000 days of life are crucial for preventing child malnutrition and death. Recommendations for enhancing child and maternal nutrition included more evidence-based health interventions and an enhanced dialogue between the farming community, public health authorities and the educational sector. Interventions included the use of low-cost interventions such as breast feeding, micronutrients, and improving the health of pregnant women.

The importance of investment in research, in particular the need for research to enhance farming production and agricultural yields, was emphasized. For example, in Guyana, the establishment of a Rice Research Centre resulted in better farming techniques and an increase from 1.5 tons per hectare to 6 tonnes per hectare in addition to rice varieties which can now withstand flood and saltwater. The country is currently undertaking research in hydro meteorology, sea defences, pumping capacity, draining and irrigation. Some countries could potentially supply food to others in the same region, however, there needs to be more research and commitment from international aid in order to build national capacity.

Research was also critical for ensuring both environmental sustainability and innovation. Engineers can play a key role in the research and planning process. Contributions of engineering technical knowledge can develop and introduce modern farming techniques such as hydroponics, drip irrigation, shade technology, and GPS so that farmers have the ability to adapt under changing climatic conditions. Furthermore, research needs to be disseminated to benefit farmers on a practical level. New innovations for enhancing production, particularly those originating from developing countries were encouraged.

Food waste is a significant challenge in both developed and developing countries which needs to be addressed by a change in behaviour. According to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, 30-50 per cent food produced worldwide does not get consumed.

The challenges differ for developing and developed countries; in developing countries, food becomes spoiled in the supply chain, harvesting, inadequate storage and transport. This requires investment in effective equipment and development of mechanisms and transfer from developed to developing countries. In developed countries, wastage is often due to rejection of produce at marketplace and wastage at home; also, efforts to change to more sustainable consumption and production patterns must be made. It is crucial to change marketing practices and the private sector must work with governments to raise awareness among people to minimize loss. Finally, international bodies must put in place strategies for better measurement of crop productivity as well as data gathering, analysis and reporting of food waste and loss and disseminate the findings.

The need to address global food price volatility and to mitigate its effects was also raised. Excessive price volatility is a complex issue with no single cause or solution. Free trade, improved access to markets, and more transparent markets were mentioned as key priorities.

Specific interventions could include fostering integrated agricultural markets, increasing transparency, and using export barriers sparingly. The Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), launched in 2011, helped promote food market transparency and coordinate international responses. AMIS was particularly helpful in ensuring a quick reaction to a sudden rise in food prices caused mainly by extreme weather events in 2012.

More social safety nets, such as cash transfers, or school feeding programmes, were needed to mitigate the effects of volatile food prices. There was also the view that agricultural markets were volatile by definition, and that prices should not be arbitrarily changed in order to thwart price volatility, as prices kept artificially low through subsidies hurt developing countries. Focus should be on increasing food production instead. Trade policies and protectionism since the 1950s have distorted markets, hindered trade and limited development.

More work needed to be done to increase regional access to food markets, in particular in infrastructure or trade sectors. This would reduce operative costs, improve efficiency, and lessen the depletion of natural resources.

International frameworks and policy cooperation were considered to be key for ensuring the most efficient use of resources for addressing food insecurity. Multi-sector and international approaches, rather than "silo" policies, should be pursued. There was general agreement that finding better ways for coordination and promoting synergies between initiatives should be a priority. Strong policy frameworks and partnerships including the private sector and civil society were noted as crucial in ensuring capacity-building as well as tracking progress. The importance of having a goal on food security and nutrition was emphasized in the context of the Rio+20 follow-up and post-2015 development agenda processes. In this regard, a multi-stakeholder, holistic, integrated, rights-based and eco-system-based approach was essential.

Some successful partnerships were highlighted, such as the G8 and African countries efforts to develop frameworks which align resources and policy changes to support investment. Having hunger issues discussed at G8/G20 demonstrates that hunger is now a political issue; and that there is an imperative to implement food security at national levels as well as at an international governance level. Approximately 50 countries were on track to meet the MDG target on hunger, but national level efforts needed to be complemented and supported by the international community. The Feed the Future initiative of the United States focus on supporting country-driven approaches, addressing agricultural and nutritional issues. The Scaling up Nutrition movement illustrated that ownership by stakeholders was key to success. The Zero Hunger Challenge, initiative of the Secretary-General, provided another framework for action. The upcoming High Level Consultations in Madrid on 4 April 2013, hosted by the Governments of Spain and Colombia, would be an opportunity to bring together all stakeholders, including producers, and raise high-level awareness on this issue.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Eliminating hunger is one of the most urgent challenges the world faces today — setting a hunger eradication goal with a comprehensive approach should be a priority for the post-2015 development agenda. In order to address food security, hunger/nutrition/malnutrition

there is a need for a global and integrated approach over the tree dimensions of sustainable development: the social, the environmental and the economic.

- Global food production is sufficient — the world needs to focus on improving access to food and reducing food loss and waste.

- Addressing food security requires a comprehensive approach, with focus on markets transparency, energy, climate change, resource and trade issues.

- There is a need to strengthen and support the international governance of food security. The Committee on World Food Security is the cornerstone of this global governance system, and there should be a closer relationship between the Committee and ECOSOC.
- Increasing transparency of markets and fostering integrating agricultural markets can help address global food price volatility.
- Greater financial investments in agricultural research as a public good, coupled with the dissemination of key findings and technical innovations, must be made. Leveraging the research and expertise of engineers is crucial in developing technological innovations and appropriate measurement tools and avoiding the use of unsustainable technologies.
- There is a need for public and private investment for infrastructure, education, innovation, affordable technologies adapted to the local situation, access to credit and land. Women small-holder farmers' equal access to agricultural resources can help increase agricultural production by around 30 per cent.
- International organizations must foster clear lines of responsibility, accountability and leadership through agreed-upon frameworks, indicators and targets. Areas for improvement in this regard include developing indicators to understand food loss, child stunting, and increased access to markets/regional trade.
- Provision of social safety nets must be employed to lessen the impacts of drought, floods, and climate change.
- Child nutrition/malnutrition must be fully recognized as a global health challenge. More evidence-based and low-cost interventions, such as the promotion of breast feeding, increasing micronutrients, stunting metrics, are needed.
- In order to enhance nutrition globally, a closer link must be fostered between the domains of health and agriculture. This can be done through education, training, mentorship, and technological knowledge transfer.