

PRESS COMMUNIQUE  
ON THE HIGH-LEVEL WORKING DINNER CO-HOSTED BY UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AND ITALY PRIME MINISTER SILVIO BERLUSCONI  
ON THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS

The United Nations Secretary-General and H.E Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy co-hosted a high-level working dinner with Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers on 3 June on the occasion of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security from 3 to 5 June 2008 in Rome. The dinner saw the participation of more than 44 Governments representing donor countries, food producing countries, and those affected by the current food crisis. In addition, eight heads of international organizations, participated in the event. Discussions focused on some of the most pressing policy issues related to the current world food security crisis and its underlying causes, namely agricultural productivity, bio-fuels, and trade restrictions, the three themes of the high-level dinner.

The Secretary-General stressed the need for a collective and concerted effort of all concerned. He noted that all agree on the most important issues: the common challenge, the need to focus on the poorest and the insufficiency of food production. He pointed out that the High Level Task Force has presented recommendations that represent the collective thinking of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. He invited participants to discuss the themes of the high-level dinner: emergency needs; agricultural production; bio-fuels; and trade restrictions.

Participants recognized that the recent dramatic escalation of food prices worldwide has multiple and complex structural causes, many of which are interconnected. It represents a challenge of global proportions and has affected millions of people. Women are particularly at risk, when pregnant and lactating: at the same time they are key to the response. The crisis threatens to undermine progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating hunger and towards other Millennium targets, and risks pushing over 100 million people back below the US\$1 a day poverty line. They also recognized that the world food crisis threatens the stability of several countries.

Participants noted that funding needs for emergency food assistance must be met fully and urgently to avert acute hunger and further unrest. They commended the generosity of those countries that responded swiftly to meet funding gaps of emergency assistance operations.

Participants recognized that the world food crisis provides an opportunity to boost agricultural production in the developing countries, in particular in Africa. They reiterated the extreme urgency of increasing agricultural production particularly before the next planting season. At the same time there is a need for a long term increase in agricultural investments – especially for smallholder farmers and an increase in development assistance for agriculture (including support for agricultural research)

Participants spoke of the need to initiate, quickly, dialogue and action on key aspects of food trade policy and practice.

Participants recognized that the UN family, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, has a unique role to play in this regard. They stressed the need for close partnerships with the private sector, civil society and NGOs in addressing the crisis.

The Secretary-General welcomed the pledge made by the participants to engage, actively and constructively, in the implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated strategy and action plan to address the current food security crisis and its underlying causes.

In this context, The Secretary-General welcomed, in particular, the intention of PM Berlusconi to ensure that agriculture, food security and fight against poverty will remain high in the G8 agenda also during the

Italian Presidency in 2009. The Secretary-General welcomed the Italian decision to dedicate Milan's Expo 2015 to world food security as another sign of Italy's commitment in achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals

Both the Secretary-General and H.E Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy expressed their hope that the momentum generated by the Rome Conference will be maintained in upcoming key events such as the G-8 Summit in July, the High-Level event on the Millennium Development Goals and the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Rome, 3 June 2008