

24 June 2008

The Secretary-General chaired the 3rd High Level Task Force (HLTF) meeting on the Global Food Security Crisis on June 24, 2008.

Mr. Jacques Diouf, FAO Director-General and HLTF Vice-Chairman, briefed the participants on the High-Level Conference on Food Security held in Rome from 5 to 7 June 2008. He indicated that FAO has already started to follow-up on the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. FAO met last week with the African Ministers of Agriculture at the '25th FAO Regional Conference for Africa' held last week in Nairobi, Kenya, and will meet with the Ministers of Agriculture of the European Union this week.

The Secretary-General noted that the Rome Conference raised the level of attention on the food crisis and provided an opportunity to constructively explore some of the most difficult issues on the table. He stressed the need to build on the momentum generated by the Conference and to focus on the way forward in addressing the food crisis. He indicated that key upcoming events, including the G8 Summit and the General Assembly's High-Level Segment, are critical occasions to build upon the foundation established to confront global challenges effectively and in a coherent way.

The Secretary-General indicated that in addition to the Millennium Development Goals and climate change, he will focus his attention throughout the G8 Summit on raising the importance of food security on international and national agendas.

HLTF Coordinator, USG John Holmes, provided an update on the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), which includes a set of actions to address both immediate and longer-term needs, including the structural factors underlying the current food price hikes. The CFA is designed to support Governments and all relevant actors in their responses to the crisis at the local, regional and international level. Elements of the CFA were presented by the Secretary-General during the Rome Conference.

The Secretary-General noted that the CFA was a process, not a document, and that it was crucial to know what the HLTF and CFA meant at the country level. He stated that governments must remain central and that there was a need for national partnerships around food and agriculture. He emphasized the need to maintain political and institutional commitment.

He stressed the need for the Task Force to continue to implement the plans and achieve the outcomes that have been developed and to engage all necessary stakeholders in a coordinated process, including member states, civil society organizations and the private sector.

The HLTF agreed that the next version of CFA would be completed by the end of the month of June, ahead of the upcoming G8 Summit.

On the way forward, the HLTF members underscored the need for all concerned to act with a sense of urgency to address, in particular, emergency humanitarian assistance as the number of people in need continues to grow. In regions such as the Horn of Africa, as a result of drought and high food prices, the situation is increasingly alarming. In regions such as the Horn of Africa, as a result of drought and high food prices, the situation is increasingly alarming and famine is becoming a serious threat. WFP reported facing difficulties accessing some critical areas, especially in West Africa and in the Horn of Africa, and in getting food across borders to those most in need. In parts of West Africa, it may take up to 120 days to get food to the communities because of the difficulty of buying food in local markets. The HLTF emphasized the need to ensure that necessary funds are made available for programs developed to get actual inputs to smallholder farmers in time for planting seasons.

The next HLTF meeting will be held in July.

