

## **Fifth meeting of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis 18 September 2008**

The High Level Task Force (HLTF) held its fifth meeting on 18 September in New York under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General noted that, given the rapidly changing dynamics of the global food crisis, it was important to take stock of where the HLTF stood in its joint response to the crisis. It was also crucial to assess what they saw as the prevailing key challenges, and what next steps, including institutional ones, the HLTF needed to take.

The Secretary-General then proceeded to brief the HLTF on the upcoming General Assembly Side Events which would provide an important opportunity to move ahead on aspects related to the global partnership for food that the HLTF had been promoting. Funding was urgently needed both for emergency and longer-term activities, and the Secretary-General would engage with as many heads of state and government as possible during the General Assembly, and encourage Member States to stay the course in responding to the food crisis.

HLTF coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, gave an overview of the situation as he saw it after the summer. Overall, there were two main messages: first, despite some positive developments, they were still in the middle of an emergency affecting particularly the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Although global prices of wheat, maize and rice had fallen since their peak in June, prices of many staples remained exceptionally high at the local level, particularly in low-income food-deficit countries. There was an urgent need for continuing action. Second, the resources going into addressing this crisis remained wholly inadequate. There had been large pledges at the Rome conference in April, but that there was little sign of most pledges being turned into commitments or hard cash. There had been no rise in overseas development assistance (ODA), and the current economic crisis was hardly favorable. There were one or two positive points, particularly the possibility of a disbursement of 1 billion Euros from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, if it materialized. So while the HLTF should not deny that there had been positive developments, the crisis was still profound and urgent.

HLTF deputy coordinator, Mr. David Nabarro, briefed HLTF members on country-level approaches to intensified and coordinated action for food and nutrition security, noting that coordination at the country-level was moving ahead effectively. The UN resident coordinators in the different countries had emphasized that they wanted to intensify their work, but they needed extra resources to boost coordination and bring in other partners to work in support of governments. Mr. Nabarro and his team continued to liaise with NGOs and bilateral donors, on the high levels of need for extra resources, particularly for agricultural inputs to smallholder farmers and strengthen social safety nets for people affected.

The Secretary-General invited HLTF members to share their thoughts on how the HLTF might tap into additional sources of funding. HLTF members thanked the Secretary-General for his leadership and agreed that the global food security crisis was far from being solved. In addition to short-term agricultural support, long-term support was needed. Official dialogue should emphasize the need for a real shift in the flow of resources to address the current crisis.

The Secretary-General elaborated on the High-Level Evening Event on the Food and Climate Change Crises which would be held on September 25. He then drew his colleagues' attention to the key messages that had been developed with HLTF agencies in order to promote a consistent set of ideas and actions guiding their numerous interventions and bilateral meetings all across events during this year's General Assembly.

The Secretary-General noted that the High-Level Task Force process continued to be a priority for him and that he was grateful for his colleagues' continued commitment and leadership on this issue.