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on the Global Food Crisis
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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is indeed an honor for me to speak this afternoon on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce. Established in 1919, during the aftermath of World War I, the founders of ICC called themselves the “Merchants of Peace.” Today the ICC represents tens of thousands of diverse companies, large and small, in 130 countries.

We care passionately about abating hunger and are very concerned about the current food shortage and global price inflation.

I commend the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for organizing this event, and especially for including the private sector. We appreciate the opportunity to add our perspective, and to participate in identifying solutions, both immediate and longer-term.

Our success depends on broad partnerships, coordinated actions and localized solutions. I assure you -- the private sector, and the 1.3 billion farmers around the world, are eager to help, and are committed to being a part of the solution. In this regard, we hope you might consider including a representative from the private sector as an advisor, to the United Nations task force recently created by the Secretary General, to address the global food crisis.

Of course, we must quickly respond to the urgent needs created by the food shortages. The private sector supports several of the short-term responses outlined in the Issues Note for today’s meeting—actions such as expanded assistance by donors and governments to ensure access to agricultural inputs, AND, the recommendation to devise targeted support

measures and safety nets for vulnerable populations. But this should be done in a manner, which supports and fosters long-term solutions.

Because if short-term aid programs circumvent local farmers, retailers, grain handlers and extension programs, it will destroy the infrastructure, investment and advancements they provide. Farmers and agri-businesses are the engines to increase productivity.

As we address the short-term needs, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past 20 years, where agriculture received little policy attention or investment in the most needed areas. As the 2008 World Bank Development Report identified, agriculture is the primary driver to abate hunger and reduce poverty. And the Secretary General, has provided outstanding vision, calling for a next generation Green Revolution, to provide sustainable solutions, particularly in Africa.

Our world has experienced a collision of circumstances that catapulted us into a global debate around food and fuel, and plunged the world's poor and hungry, into even worse situations.

Today, over one billion people live in absolute poverty. Of the 854 million chronically malnourished people, 96 percent live in the developing world.

We must work with these people, the world's poorest, to provide them the resources to help themselves—to move past subsistence farming and the ongoing need for food aid, generation after generation. Solutions that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable will gradually prime the pump of the rural economy.

Food and water are biological needs, at the very core of humanity. WE ARE NOT going to shrink demand. And we shouldn't try. The fact that several nations have improved their economies, to afford their people better diets, is progress. We don't want to step backward.

Instead, we must increase supply, to adequately feed the people in our world today and the additional 1.7 billion people we expect in the next 20 years.

Hunger, and, in its larger form—poverty and insecurity—is at the core of global instability. Agriculture must be higher on our agenda in a world of increasing food demands and limited resources.

While there is no single solution to our global food crisis, technology advancements have, over time, contributed greatly, to increased food productivity, and nutritional quality, while limiting the amount of new land required for cultivation.

Since the 1960s, technologies and improved agricultural practices have helped farmers increase yields by as much as 130 percent. Over that time, as the world's population doubled and the number of acres under cultivation remained stable, the per capita food supply has increased by 25 percent. But still, this is not enough.

Today, farmers in some regions reach only 20% of the productivity levels enjoyed by farmers elsewhere, because they lack access to credit, technology, collaborative extension services, and global markets.

The business and industry sector believes several key policy points, would provide a framework for action:

1. **First, encourage research and the dissemination of technologies and techniques for sustainable agriculture and water management.** In particular, in the context of climate change, public and private researchers should collaborate to develop technologies such as drought, heat, and salinity resistant crops. And, these need to be made accessible.
2. **Second, deliver extension and agronomy programming at a local level, to ensure productivity increases are sustainable.** The benefits of investing in

research and innovation can only be realized, if these are adequately disseminated. And farmers should be rewarded for implementing sustainable practices.

3. **Third, increase stewardship training in agricultural best practices at the local level.** Stewardship, as a cornerstone for sustainable agriculture, is the primary means of encouraging integrated approaches to crop management.

4. **And finally, establish secure land tenure, and, in particular, recognize female farmers as land owners.** Women play a key role across sectors and at all levels of society, and their contributions must be recognized and valued.

In closing, I would like to share an excerpt from an article published in a 1974 journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The article, titled, Agriculture—The Island Empire, was authored by Andre and Jean Mayer, two American nutritionists.

“Few scientists think of agriculture as the chief, or the model science. Many indeed, do not consider it a science at all. Yet, it was the first science—the mother of all sciences; it remains the science that makes all human life possible; and it may well be, that before the century is over, the success or failure of Science as a whole, will be judged by the success or failure of agriculture.”

Thank you.