



IIMSAM

Intergovernmental Institution for the use of Micro-algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition
Permanent Consultative Observer with the United Nations Economic and Social Council

United Nations Economic and Social Council

Global Food Crisis

Special Meeting

STATEMENT BY:

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Excellencies, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

It was last month when I read about the statement by the United Nations Secretary General H.E. Ban Ki Moon that he delivered in Berne, Switzerland on the 29th of April where he emphasized to prioritize the need to feed the hungry. His mention of the spectre of malnutrition concomitant with the spread of wide spread hunger and social unrest on an unlimited scale unless these emergency situations are fully addressed needs a careful consideration by the international community.

When I was in school, I read about Gandhi who said that *there are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread*. How relevant these words are especially when the whole world is facing a severe food crisis in our times.

Food prices have been soaring almost everywhere, and it really does seem as if all the farmland in the world can't produce enough to feed the world. The UN's Rome-based food agency, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), has announced that its food price index rose by 40 per cent last year. In fact the news is worse than that: the index is still rising.

I read a research report by the Waste & Resources Action Programme that came out last week and said that the cost of wasted food in UK households is 10 billion pounds a year. The research found that salad, fruit and bread were most commonly wasted and 60 per cent of all dumped food was untouched.

Alas! Bread... one of the basic needs of us humans; and we find shelter in dialectics and lofty arguments that deal with demand, supply, and distribution aspects in our inability to deliver it to the one who needs it the most.

The UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) attributes the food crisis in the world, especially in the developing countries to lack of foresight and better planning; and lack of investment in agriculture over a long period of time; and diversion of precious natural resources for bio-fuel production.

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), higher food prices have radically different effects across countries and population groups. Many countries that have been traditional food exporters are forced to ban exports to protect local consumers.

Net food importers, however, struggle to meet domestic food demand. Given that almost all countries in Africa are net importers of cereals, they suffer maximum because of rising prices.

At the household level, surging and volatile food prices hit those who can afford it the least—the poor and food insecure. The nutrition of the poor is also at risk when they are not shielded from the price rises. Higher food prices lead poor people to limit their food

consumption and shift to even less-balanced diets, with harmful effects on health in the short and long run.

At the household level, the poor spend about 50 to 60 percent of their overall budget on food. For a five-person household living on US\$1 per person per day, a 50 percent increase in food prices removes up to US\$1.50 from their US\$5 budget, and growing energy costs also add to their adjustment burden.

It is all happening in a time where words fail to describe the anguish and severe casualties suffered by the Developing and the Least Developed Countries. How shall we save the one that we do not see and whose cries and tears are in so distant a land that they go unnoticed by lofty platforms that discuss their very fate; and how shall we redeem our pledges that we made so oft to the peoples of the world.

At a time when almost forty thousand lives are lost daily because of malnutrition and over 854 million people especially in the Developing and the Least Developed Countries are disempowered because of malnutrition; it is imperative that the international community and development agencies explore holistic and practical approaches of contemporary relevance at the earliest to fulfill their respective commitments.

Never before in the human history but the times of crises which we are presently witnessing that there is an inherent and urgent need to explore the ways of food fortification so that the daily nutritional requirements of a human body can be delivered to the peoples of the world. Secretary General H.E. Ban ki Moon's emphasis on the need of fresh ideas to strategize the initiatives of the international community to counter such challenges attests to that. The Intergovernmental Institution for the use of Micro-algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition through its initiatives that have a special priority for the Developing and the Least Developed Countries is committed for the same.

We envision that the development agencies and the international community join our endeavor to use Spirulina as an intervention and enrichment tool of both policy and practical relevance to fortify food so that the nutritional benefits associated with Spirulina can be delivered to the neediest.

The inherent link of malnutrition as a major impediment to achieve the UN MDGs needs a careful attention to find feasible and practical solutions to address it effectively, efficiently, and immediately.

The micro-algae Spirulina not only because of high nutritional component but also other factors such as easy availability, accessibility, affordability and assimilation in human body where other supplements fail; holds significant potential to realize a world free of hunger and malnutrition, and achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

IIMSAM through its advocacy in the UN System and through its initiatives would be a potent medium to eradicate malnutrition; achieve food security; and bridge the health divide through Spirulina.

The opportunity to put forth our views at the emergency meeting on global food crisis would sensitize the international community and other development organizations about our approaches that aspire to initiate empowerment processes that actuate when the very issue of malnutrition is addressed.

Since the vortex of global food crises would have serious negative impacts in the short and medium term; and would take some significant time to subside; it is imperative that Spirulina be mainstreamed to deliver the daily nutritional requirements of the humankind.

Mainstreaming the use of Spirulina in the sustainable development agenda not only builds local capacities and capabilities in a region, it also contributes significantly to counter various deprivations; and towards the enrichment of the human capital. Cooperation is the key to success and to realize our ambitions.

We at the IIMSAM commit ourselves towards; as Secretary General calls it, *real commitment and real action*. I am confident that our interaction would result in spreading awareness and build support for our cause; and each one of us that is present here would be an agent to realize and accomplish our mission of a world free of hunger and malnutrition.

Thank you.