



NORWAY

Economic and Social Council

Special meeting on the global food crisis

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STATEMENT

By

**H.E. Mr Johan L. Løvald
Ambassador
Permanent Representative**

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Mr President,

Let me first of all thank you for convening this meeting. I would also like to recognize the secretariat for producing a clear and succinct issue note.

The global food crisis has already had severe effects – and the situation may become even more dire. The current situation places a heavy and often unjust economic burden on many developing economies. It is in everybody's interest to avoid this.

It seems clear that the underlying causes of the rapidly increasing food prices are mostly long-term in nature. Yet, the most dramatic effects are immediate and urgent. Therefore, the response needs to include immediate as well as long-term initiatives.

The hardest and most immediately hit are probably the millions of beneficiaries of the World Food Programme. Also, a growing number of people cannot any longer afford to buy enough staple food for their daily consumption. It is essential that the international humanitarian community, coordinated by the UN, identifies the most vulnerable groups, and gains access to them. A response which comes too late and brings too little may have grave consequences, even in the long run. This is well described in the issue note.

Among the urgent measures suggested so far, Norway has taken action on countering the humanitarian consequences in Africa. The equivalent of 20 million USD has been pledged for this purpose. 12 million of this will be allocated to WFP's activities in Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, DRC and Zimbabwe. 8 million USD will be allocated to Government and institutions in the most severely affected African countries to fund national plans and initiatives.

Norway has provided support to an Exogenous Shock Facility administered by the IMF, hoping that this facility can be adapted to offer effective support to many hard pressed economies in the months to come. We take due note of initiatives by the international financial institutions, including pledged support by the regional banks, and the efforts by various members of the UN family, notably the World Food Programme.

No single institution or agency can solve the hunger challenge alone, not even the emergency responses. We welcome the Secretary General's Task Force and its broad perspective. The importance of partnerships and coordination within UN and with other humanitarian and development actors cannot be overemphasised. There is an urgent need for improved coordination – *a concerted, coordinated and comprehensive global response*, to quote the paper. This also means involving the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and OCHA. And it means making the most out of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which Norway is among the top four donors. It is my hope that the humanitarian reform will give guidance to immediate action on the ground.

Mr. President,

Norway, believes that the long-term policy responses to these challenges have to be developed and made operational on the basis of national processes. The governments themselves must be in the driver's seat – planning and implementing their own policies. The UN and other stakeholders should assist and support, but the national government must always be in charge. The focus should be on the most vulnerable states and on securing an environmentally sustainable development.

An increase of agricultural production and rural development seems to be an obvious priority. In Norway's opinion this should be combined with measures aimed at securing that the farmers themselves, including smallholders, be made able to benefit more directly from the price paid by the consumer.

Real results in the agricultural sector can best be achieved by involving the private sector. Norway has engaged Yara, the world's leading plant nutrients company, in a public-private partnership aimed at ensuring timely and affordable supplies of fertilizers to enable small farmers to better prepare for the next planting season.

The substantial reduction of developed countries' agricultural subsidies and tariffs is an important issue in the Doha Round negotiations. Norway is committed to do its part to comply with the mandate of these negotiations.

Norway agrees with the objective in the proposed Action Plan to ensure that policies to promote bio-fuels must be consistent with food security and environmental sustainability. However, it would be wrong to assume that the production of bio-fuel is a major driving force behind the increase of food prices. The interplay between biofuel production, food prices and food security merits further study and careful monitoring.

On a final note, Mr President, Norway is willing to work through the multilateral system, as well as through our bilateral agreements, to counter the effects of the global food crisis. We strongly believe that developing countries should not have to carry the full economic burden of the cost increases. Above all, the current crisis should not be allowed to reverse the economic and social gains made in recent years. We stand ready to discuss how Norway can play a more effective role in supporting vulnerable economies in this difficult period.

Thank you, Mr. President.