



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Kim Bong-hyun
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ECOSOC Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis
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Mr. President,

First of all, I would like to join the previous speakers in thanking you for convening this special meeting on the global food crisis. This meeting dovetails into the mandate given to the Economic and Social Council by the World Summit Outcome and the General Assembly resolution 61/16, which call upon the Council to serve as a major platform for the engagement of multiple stakeholders to respond better and more rapidly to developments and international relief efforts. My delegation hopes that this meeting will serve as a key building block on the path to create a comprehensive action plan for the international community to tackle the food crisis.

Mr. President,

The international society is now faced with a grave situation in which we could lose hard-won achievements in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) due to unprecedented skyrocketing food prices. We have to employ all the measures at our disposal to prevent such a reversal. A crisis of such proportions calls for collective response and cooperation of the whole world. Since this crisis has multiple causes and multiple effects, our response also should be multi-faceted and all-encompassing.

In light of the complexity and seriousness of this crisis, my delegation believes that the United Nations must take the lead in coordinating global efforts, in close cooperation with the Bretton Woods Institutions and other related international bodies. In this regard, the Republic of Korea welcomes and strongly supports the Secretary-General's leadership and initiative, as indicated in the establishment of the Task Force on the Global Food Crisis.

Challenges presented by this staggering food shortage are not simply immediate hurdles, but also long-term concerns that we must address now. While grain stocks are at their lowest in 30 years, the World Bank predicts in its recent report that food prices will remain high in 2008 and 2009 and then decline as supply and demand respond to high prices; however they are likely to remain well above the 2004 levels through 2015 for most food crops. Under these circumstances, multi-faceted policies encompassing strategic and long-term approaches along with immediate food assistance are required to ensure a sustainable food security. In this vein, the Korean government notes that in late April, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) produced a communiqué including the short-, medium-, and long-term priorities to tackle the food security issue.

Mr. President,

My delegation is dismayed by the WFP's estimation that roughly a third of the world's food shortages are the result of bottlenecks in local markets and distribution systems. This means we can prevent a sizeable portion of food shortages by simply improving market efficiency. We must take immediate steps to this end.

As a country which successfully overcame hunger and poverty in a relatively short period of time, the Republic of Korea is willing to assume its share of responsibility and join the international effort to address the food crisis. In this context, the Korean government has actively participated in the humanitarian assistance of the international community, including the contribution of 1.5 million US dollars to the World Food Programme (WFP) this year.

Mr. President,

The ongoing food crisis is undeniably a formidable challenge to the world. However, my delegation believes that if handled properly, the current crisis can become an opportunity to deal with the root problems of many of the world's poorest people. We all know what we have to do to ensure global food security. What is necessary to us now is political will and leadership to translate our commitments into action. In this vein, the high-level conference on food security in Rome early next month will be another very important forum in which we can further develop our common strategy. I would like to conclude my statement by wishing the conference a success.

Thank you.