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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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**Special Meeting
of the Economic and Social Council
on the Global Food Crisis**

**Statement by
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we grapple with an immediate global challenge that humanity faces today – the food crisis – it is important to take a step back in history – to reflect upon the very foundation of our work today: sustainable development.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development warned in its report, *Our Common Future*, that the various global ‘crises’ that were of public concern in the 1980s ... “are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, and energy crisis. They are all one.”

The situation is no different today: the food crisis and other crises we face today are not isolated and mutually exclusive. The food crisis, energy crisis, climate change crisis, land degradation, drought and desertification crises, water crisis, biodiversity loss crisis, and many others: are all one. Solutions are, therefore, multifaceted.

There is no doubt that the immediate response to the food crisis is humanitarian: UNEP supports efforts to address the food needs of millions of people across the world who are at risk. It supports funding appeals to raise enough resources for food aid. Food for work programmes could also be a solution to tackle localized land degradation problems.

Parallel to the immediate humanitarian needs, UNEP believes that the international community should also focus on the root causes of this crisis – the sustainability crisis. It is evident that environmental degradation undermines development and threatens future development progress. The unsustainable use of natural resources, including land, water, forests and fisheries, is a threat to individual livelihoods as well as local, national and international economies. Market-distorting subsidies are also a factor, contributing to overexploitation of the environment.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) have reported that despite the crucial importance in supporting societies, agriculture remains the largest driver of genetic erosion, species loss and conversion of natural habitats around the world. Therefore, our solutions to the food crisis should also address the ongoing degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity loss. In addition to supporting food security, functioning ecosystems are crucial buffers against extreme climate events, and act as carbon sinks and filters for water-borne and airborne pollutants. Programmes to support local food production in developing countries would not only support the recovery of agriculture but also contribute to local and national food security.

We believe that it is neither strategic nor sustainable to pick on one cause for the food crisis, for example, biofuels production; or one solution, for example, increased food production or biotechnology as silver bullets. Doing so would be to oversimplify a complex situation whose causes and solutions lie across a spectrum of environment-development linkages, and stakeholder interests.

Investment is key to our success. Just as society invests in social and economic infrastructure, the international community must also invest in what has been described as the nature infrastructure: our ecosystems, including land, investing in land restoration, integrated water resources management, improving soil productivity, among other interventions. We have to invest in agriculture so that we enhance its contribution to ecosystem management but also ensure that increased production is not a threat to our ecosystems.

We have to invest in research, and in science and technology. We should get relevant and up-to-date information to different stakeholders and strengthen ecological literacy so that people make decisions in their daily lives which support sustainable development. The world knows a lot about the environment but not enough on it to ensure that they make a difference in the way they live.

UNEP is ready to play its role to ensure that we address both the short- and long-term dimensions of the food crisis.

Thank you.
