

27 October 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Food Day**

H.E Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
H.E Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe, President of the Economic and Social Council,
Mr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization,
Ms. Josette Sheeran, Executive-Director of the World Food Programme,
Ms. Barbara Stocking, Chief Executive OXFAM GB,
Ms. Leila Ratsifandrihamanana, Director, FAO Liaison Office in New York,
Ms. Sirpa Jarvenpaa, Director of the Office of the President of the International Fund for Agricultural
Development,
Ms. Dee Dee Bridgewater, FAO Goodwill Ambassador,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We meet here today to commemorate the 31st observance of World Food Day and – coincidentally- the 66th anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

My congratulations to FAO for its efforts and contributions. I wish you continued success in your important work.

On this occasion, we come together to raise awareness on world hunger and show our solidarity in the global struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

We come together to reaffirm the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

And we come together to renew and strengthen commitments made, forge cooperation and enhance political action to address food insecurity.

Unfortunately, an immense amount of work needs to be done to make this a reality for all humanity.

Today, nearly one billion people are victims of food insecurity and under-nourishment on a daily basis. In the Horn of Africa, drought and famine are causing an unimaginable humanitarian crisis.

The first Millennium Development Goal set the target of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger between 1990 and 2015. Today we are far from this target.

And by the year 2050, many of the world's poorest countries and regions will see their populations double. As a result, demand will rapidly expand and food production will need to markedly increase.

And compounding this is the need to face climate change and its impacts on people and agriculture.

We therefore need to act today to be prepared for future challenges.

In the short run, targeted safety nets and social programs are essential for alleviating hunger and poverty, while at the same time providing a foundation for development.

Granting market access for agricultural products from developing countries will help in this respect.

And small and medium-sized farmers should be supported through increased resource allocation in rural infrastructure and agricultural services. This will be of particular support to agriculture and livelihood recovery efforts, particularly in the Horn of Africa.

Over the longer-term, a food-security strategy that relies on a combination of boosting local production and productivity and a general increased role for trade will help to reduce price volatility, while improving food availability and accessibility.

Additionally, world leaders at the High-level Meeting on desertification on 20 September and at the COP 10 meeting earlier this month, emphasised that concrete targets are needed to combat desertification, drought and land degradation and their severe humanitarian consequences, including food insecurity.

As President of the General Assembly, I have identified "Sustainable Development and global prosperity" as one of my key focus areas this session. As Member States prepare for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 - the opportunity is ripe to re-think the global approach to sustainable development, which should include consideration of food security issues.

I will also do everything I can this session to focus the attention of the General Assembly on the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this World Food Day, I urge Member States and partners to find lasting political, technical and financial solutions so that nearly one billion men, women and children no longer live in desperate hunger.

Thank you.