

11 April 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the High-level Thematic Debate on Addressing
Excessive Price Volatility in Food and Related Commodity Markets**

Your Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic,
Your Excellency Ambassador Desra Percaya, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council,
His Excellency Ambassador Virgilio Alcantara, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic
to the United Nations,
Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social
Affairs, DESA,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Esteemed Colleagues,

Before I begin this meeting, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge with deep sorrow the
earthquake that took place in Indonesia just a few hours ago.
I have learnt that it reached a terrifying magnitude of 8.6. This is simply devastating.

On behalf of the General Assembly, let me extend my deepest sympathies, condolences and support to
the people and the Government of Indonesia.

As you are aware, tomorrow I will convene a thematic debate on disaster risk reduction.

The recurrence of such natural disasters is a reminder for all of us that we must focus our efforts on
tackling this urgent phenomena, and this is what we will embark on tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my privilege to welcome you to this high-level thematic debate of the United Nations General
Assembly.

Our topic today – “Addressing excessive price volatility in food and related commodity markets” –
presents us with an issue, or rather, a set of issues, that are of deep concern to all Member States.

What explains the sustained, exceptionally high prices of food and other commodities during recent
years?

How has this affected the process of development?

What can be done to limit the impact of high prices on the most vulnerable populations in developing countries?

And in particular, what can be done, and what is being done, to address the root causes of commodity price inflation and volatility?

Today's debate reflects a deep concern among Member States about the impact that excessive commodity price volatility has on food security and sustainable development in developing countries.

We will focus, in particular, on the potential adverse impact on the most vulnerable populations, the vast majority of whom live in nations that are dependent on food imports to meet basic needs.

This shared concern was formally expressed in General Assembly resolution 66/188, which was adopted on December 22, 2012.

That resolution recognizes "the need to improve the adequate regulation, functioning, and transparency of financial and commodity markets in order to address commodity price volatility."

It also takes note of two important reports prepared by the Secretary-General and by a number of UN system agencies.

And, *inter alia*, it "stresses the need to take active measures to reduce excessive food price volatility, while acknowledging that there is an in-complete understanding of its causes and more research needs to be done."

Distinguished colleagues,

The General Assembly as you know, is a political body.

Although this debate is burdened by complex and challenging technical issues, it will ultimately be a political debate.

It is understandable that some of us may feel that the issues of financial regulation are best left to technical experts.

Yet, the role of political deliberation is not to define technical solutions, nor to replace working institutions, but to decide whether and when an issue has arisen with sufficient urgency that new directives must be given and new approaches considered.

Our objective today, accordingly, is to engage in a thorough discussion of the state of evidence on the causes and impacts of large-scale financial investment in commodities markets.

We should also explore and evaluate alternative approaches to addressing financial market weaknesses.

I invite you to jointly deliberate on the proper manner for Member States to reason together on what, if any, further process is required.

I am delighted by the quality and diversity of the speakers assembled to support our deliberations today, and I am very pleased to welcome our distinguished panellists to this debate.

I am especially honoured to welcome to these meeting, His Excellency Leonel Fernandez Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic.

President Fernandez has been a force of nature in bringing this issue to the attention of the General Assembly, and I am truly delighted that he is able to participate actively with us in these important deliberations today.

For bringing this impressive group of experts to the United Nations today, I would like to thank the great efforts and talents of the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic, especially His Excellency Ambassador Virgilio Alcantara and his very efficient team.

I am also pleased to welcome to the podium His Excellency Desra Percaya, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, in his capacity as Vice President of the Economic and Social Council.

Ambassador Percaya, along with ECOSOC President Miloš Koterec and the other members of the Bureau, have been working hard to strengthen the role of ECOSOC as a bridge between the UN system and other intergovernmental institutions committed to sustainable development.

The representation of ECOSOC here today is very much in the spirit of this vital undertaking.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to colleagues from the Secretariat of UNCTAD, particularly from the New York Office, who have also supported this event.

I look forward to today's discussions and wish everyone a successful event.

I thank you.