



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-fifth Session
"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"

Rome, Italy 15-19 October 2018

STATEMENT OF THE CFS CHAIRPERSON

This forty-fifth session of CFS is taking place eleven years, two months and two weeks before 2030, the year by which we agreed to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition.

Progress reports say that, instead of moving towards zero, the number of hungry and malnourished is going up.

Today, one in nine persons —adding up to hundreds of millions— will be unable to produce or buy food; a disproportionate number of them are women and children across the Global South.

The main reasons behind this ongoing disaster are man-made conflict and climate change.

In the face of war and weather extremes, the most vulnerable are forced to make a choice: either succumb to hunger, or migrate to seek survival somewhere else.

At the same time, malnutrition propels rising rates of obesity and associated diseases in both developed and developing countries.

Everyone agrees that the persistence —indeed, the escalation— of hunger and malnutrition is morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable.

CFS —that is to say, we— can offer solutions for lifting this shadow that is eclipsing the human condition.

A rights-based mandate emerged in 1948, when article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized the right to food.

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It took us 56 years to flesh out, in 2004, a set of guidelines for realizing this fundamental human right.

‘Fundamental’ means ‘basic’ and ‘vital’, because the person who knows not where her next meal is coming from cannot allow herself to think about, much less exercise, any other right.

And so it is that three years ago, all governments adopted the Sustainable Development Agenda as a roadmap to zero hunger; since then, we have been moving in the opposite direction.

International experts tell us that, in spite of these trends, they remain optimistic, with caveats.

This positive outlook is not wishful thinking, but a technical calculation based upon a model in which all stakeholders come together with focused will for taking swift, concerted and decisive action.

Technical experts go on to say that even as will and action converge against hunger, we must move away from the ‘business as usual’ approach.

On the face of it, this advice makes sense—and poses a dilemma: either we carry on doing the same, which is not getting us any closer to zero hunger, or we do things differently—which, to be sure, will necessitate a process for everyone to agree on exactly what is to be done in a different way.

While we consider this predicament, the Committee on World Food Security can make significant contributions to the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

In point of fact, CFS came to be in 1974, in the wake of a global food crisis; following the outbreak of another such emergency in 2007, we reinvented CFS as a revolutionary multi-stakeholder platform.

As we move closer to 2030, CFS provides an inclusive, flexible, open and transparent space with annual plenaries and a comprehensive schedule of events and meetings, including thematic open-ended working groups; we expect to dedicate special attention to the workstream on nutrition and food systems.

In a mutually reinforcing dynamic, this platform provides legitimacy for generating policy products whose value and relevance—to quote from the CFS Evaluation—arise from its inclusiveness, which is the first guiding principle of the 2009 reform.

The next twelve months will be critical for an improved and strengthened CFS, which requires wider and stronger partnerships to drive ever closer and effective collaboration in the face of mounting challenges.

CFS needs a recommitment from all its members; this was the theme of the Civil Society Forum this past weekend.

CFS also needs to become more and better known, and to expand its inclusiveness, welcoming more actors from its traditional constituencies.

Potential partners that may or may not fit into the existing mechanisms are contacting us expressing their wish to contribute to zero hunger through the inclusive model of CFS.

These entities—whose core mandate may not be directly related to food security—can provide support in the form of advice on a wide range of subjects, as well as in mobilizing human and financial resources, delivering political capital, as well as advocacy and visibility.

These friends of CFS include scientific communities, action-oriented and faith-based organizations, universities, connectors and influencers, innovators, think tanks, press agencies and media outlets, international legal organizations, parliamentarians and social protection mechanisms, among many others that have yet to discover that they too can stand up for this cause.

It is self-evident that zero hunger can only be realized if everyone commits to take action and work together.

In just over a decade, the history of this time will come to be written: we will either have eradicated hunger and all forms of malnutrition, or we will have failed to do so.

If we are victorious, that is to say, if every person in every country is thenceforth sustainably food secure, 2030 will be the most consequential turning point in history.

Humanity, unleashed from the scourge of hunger, will have found its collective soul and a new age will commence, as our possibilities will be limitless.

I believe what the experts tell us, that we can defeat hunger in our lifetimes —so I stand among the optimists— and I hope to see that day of deliverance.

I am also aware of the cold statistics, the alarming trends, and the formidable challenges.

If we fail —an undesirable outcome that nonetheless is a realistic possibility— the world will not end; we will look back to analyze what went right and wrong; we will identify best practices, learn the lessons, and agree on new targets and future deadlines.

If SDG-2 of Zero Hunger is not met, each and every one of us will have a question to answer: “Did I do everything I could when there was still a chance?”

For now, it seems that there is still time; that we can still do what needs to be done to end hunger.

Together we can achieve this fundamental freedom!