

**PROPOSAL**  
**REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON**  
**HUNGER, FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION IN THE CARIBBEAN:**  
**RIGHT TO FOOD AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES**

***Antigua & Barbuda***  
***August 1 and 2, 2013***

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**BACKGROUND**

Millions of people worldwide suffer from hunger and under-nutrition. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that nearly 870 million people, or one in eight people in the world, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012. Almost all the hungry people, 852 million, live in developing countries, representing 15 percent of the population of developing countries. There are 16 million people undernourished in developed countries (FAO 2012). The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) estimates that nearly 5.165 million people, or 30 percent of the entire CARICOM population (including Haiti), were suffering from under-nutrition in 2012. When Haiti is excluded from the analysis of the CARICOM, the undernourished population is estimated to be 609,384 persons, or only 8.8 percent of the non-Haitian CARICOM population.

Poverty is the principal cause of hunger. The UNECLAC estimates that nearly 9.519 million people, or 55 percent of the entire CARICOM population (including Haiti), were poor in 2012. When Haiti is excluded from the analysis of the CARICOM, the impoverished population is estimated to be 1.608 million persons, or only 23 percent of the non-Haitian CARICOM population. The level of poverty in the CARICOM Region ranges from a low of 9.3 percent in the Bahamas to highs of 41.3 percent in Belize and 77 percent in Haiti.

A major condition associated with poverty and its reproduction is *food insecurity*. This condition exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life. Food insecurity may be chronic, seasonal, or temporary, and it may occur at the household, regional, or national level.

Worldwide commitment to improve global food insecurity was demonstrated at the 1996 World Food Summit, where 186 countries pledged to reduce the number of hungry, food-



insecure people in the world by 50 percent (to 400 million) by the year 2015. Extreme poverty remains an alarming problem in the CARICOM region, despite some progress in food production and poverty reduction.

It has been generally accepted that any concerted assault on hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition needs to involve a multitude of stakeholders, recognizing the different manifestations of hunger, and considering the impact of overweight, obesity and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases. These pose relevant challenges to the realization of the right to food in the region. At the same time it is important to be aware of new challenges including: the impact of globalization, rapid urbanization and transformation of food and agricultural systems, and widespread lifestyle changes; climate change and other threats to the environment; technological and scientific advances that change the nature of communication, production and distribution of food and agricultural commodities; and the volatility of food and energy prices. Basic premises for such a framework for action include a common understanding of problems and solutions, the availability of reliable data and information, adequate capacity in the analysis, planning and implementation of policies and programs, and effective accountability systems with systematic progress monitoring and impact evaluation. Having in place inclusive, transparent and rights-based institutional mechanisms and governance systems that are coordinated and sustainable, can make a difference.

Food and nutrition security is a multifaceted concept and includes dimensions of food availability, access, stability and utilization. Similarly, good nutrition depends on effective actions across sectors, including improving access to a diverse diet, appropriate care and feeding practices, adequate health and sanitation, and good information, communication and education for the prevention of malnutrition in all its forms. Hence, progress in this broad field depends on effective governance systems which promote a multidisciplinary approach and the involvement of many stakeholders, with participation, transparency, equity and accountability as key principles. Such governance systems will lead to inclusive, transparent, accountable and evidence-based policy processes, supported by appropriate legislation, well-functioning institutions and ongoing social dialogue.

In seeking to address the complex issue of harmonization across all sectors and stakeholders groups to ensure positive and significant impact on the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition at the national and regional levels, CARICOM and Member States must endeavor to address three critical areas: (i) generation and promotion of explicit political commitments for the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; (ii) appropriate governance mechanisms at the national and regional levels; and (iii) stronger accountability and monitoring capacities, particularly in connection with the formulation, implementation and evaluation of sector-wide and cross-sectoral policies, programs and investments. In this context, success will be highly dependent on an appropriate mix of: advocacy for hunger reduction, supported by

adequate information and analysis; enhanced and evidence-based decision-making; coordination and capacity development.

The 2010 CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and the 2011 Action Plan to implement the Policy represent important milestones in the CARICOM Region. Together they represent both a vision and a roadmap for moving diligently forward to address ever-pressing food and nutrition security issues. They also represent a strong commitment by the CARICOM Member States to put forth their best efforts through appropriate policies and programs to significantly reduce food and nutrition insecurity, particularly within the segment of the population most affected. Many of the Member States are individually responding to the call, and have formulated or are in the process of formulating national food and nutrition security policies. In doing so, they have shown themselves to be guided by the principles of the right to food for all in the Region and in each country. These principles are clearly spelled out in the provisions of the Regional Policy, and are reflected in the priority actions as defined in the Regional Action Plan. These priority actions are to be implemented with full regard at all times for good governance practices. At the same time, while the protection and realization of the right to food is a major responsibility of government, its consolidation and sustainability depend on the existence of inclusive dialogue processes where non-state actors have an essential role to play. This in turn calls for strong partnerships between government and civil society, while empowering actors at grassroots levels to ensure their active and meaningful participation.

It is, therefore, against this background that this Regional Dialogue on Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition, involving relevant ministers and parliamentarians, government officials, the private sector and civil society is held.

## **DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objective**

To facilitate the exchange of experiences among the diverse stakeholders (public sector, private sector, civil society) participating in the ongoing processes for the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in the Caribbean, promote political commitment and create/strengthen permanent spaces that will ensure appropriate governance and accountability mechanisms, taking as a reference the integration and articulation of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean (FPH).

### **Specific Objectives**

- a) To gain knowledge on right to food principles and governance issues in relation to policy-making, institutional and legislative frameworks and social dialogue processes

- b) To gain knowledge about the FPH experience in different contexts and countries and implications on governance
- c) To dialogue and reflect on the role of different sectors and stakeholders with respect to political commitment, governance and accountability mechanisms and policy formulation in FNS, in response to the hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition issues affecting Caribbean countries and vulnerability issues among different social sectors in each country
- d) To define ways to make FNS a top priority in the regional and the national political agendas and to support FNS institutional development in the context of national policies that have been recently approved or are being formulated, focusing actions and resources on the poorest population
- e) To identify the most relevant elements for the realization of the right to food in the Caribbean and to agree on developing a strategy for implementation.
- f) To explore the possibility for the establishment and determination of the role of a space for regional dialogue on the realization of right to food, building governance and strengthening legislative works around FNS, taking the existing FPH as a reference
- g) To agree on strategic issues proposed by the Caribbean participants for inclusion in the discussions at the IV Forum of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in September 2013 and at other regional and supranational spaces for political dialogue.

### **Expected Results**

- The participants will have increased knowledge about right to food and governance issues, as well as knowledge about different experiences at the national and supranational levels..
- The participants will have visualized the advantage of creating inclusive and permanent partnerships for dialogue and action oriented to strengthen political commitment to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and to support governance and accountability mechanisms at the national and regional levels.
- The participants will have proposed an operational mechanism representing the voice of different sectors to coordinate and follow-up the agreements reached, in order to support national processes, the Caribbean regional vision and the FPH in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**This meeting is also supported also by**

