



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Fifty-first Session
Making a difference in food security and nutrition

Rome (Italy), 23–27 October 2023

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE CFS

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I began my speech to this plenary session just over a year ago by remarking that we were holding our meeting during a **global emergency**. One year on, we are still experiencing a global emergency, but it has been **exacerbated** by the outbreak of new conflicts, the deeper impact of climate change and the onset of the El Niño phenomenon.

Of all the causes of hunger and malnutrition, **war, violence and terrorism** are the most serious and the most preventable.

Compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council are the basic and indispensable pillars of the human right to adequate food: our Committee's mandate is to pursue this cause. It is unacceptable to **weaponize hunger or food deprivation**. It is imperative to **ensure full access** to humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable people.

Without peace, it is impossible to end hunger and malnutrition.

Without an end to hunger and malnutrition, peace is impossible.

Distinguished delegates,

The fall in the international price of some foodstuffs should not mislead us. High interest rates, local currency depreciation, potential energy price shocks, and the external indebtedness of dozens of countries in the wake of a devastating pandemic keep **hundreds of millions of people in a critical situation**.

This crisis is not just any crisis. It reveals structural weaknesses in agriculture and food systems that prevent them from making progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition, preserving ecosystems and eradicating rural poverty – suffered most acutely by smallholders and rural workers, especially women.

Because of the climate emergency and recurring shocks, there is a **risk of this becoming the new normal**.

This new normal requires us **to respond urgently** to the impact of the crisis on the people who experience the greatest exclusion and vulnerability, **and to accelerate without further delay the fair, agroecological transformation** of the world's agrifood systems with bold and appropriate policies and responsible investments.

This crisis calls on us to **accelerate transformation, not put it off**.

It is imperative that countries have the fiscal space to do so and that international financial institutions do whatever it takes, **whatever the cost**.

A **Global SDG Stimulus Plan**, as proposed by the Secretary-General, is imperative. It is also imperative for all countries to meet their international commitments to global public finance, development aid and the fight against climate change, particularly when it comes to adaptation.

It is imperative for all companies to ensure that all their investments contribute positively to the SDGs.

Distinguished delegates,

In September this year, **our leaders** met in New York for the quadrennial SDG Summit.

The 2030 Agenda remains **the beacon that guides and unites us**.

Despite enormous progress in recent decades in reducing hunger and malnutrition, and progress in recent years in reducing child stunting, **it is a disgrace that SDG 2** has the worst prospects of being achieved.

But this **is not unavoidable**. We cannot allow it to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. This trend can and must be reversed, and it is in our hands to do so.

That is why we must **join** all our efforts.

This is why we will devote the first part of this Fifty-first Session to discussing **coordinated policy responses** to the current food crisis, and the transformation of food systems needed to achieve

this, focusing on the empowerment of small-scale and family farmers, Indigenous Peoples and women and girls.

We will strengthen the links between this Committee's deliberations and agreements and the global agenda and with other key processes for achieving the Right to Food.

We will launch a year of **celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines** to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

And **we will elect my successor** as Chair of this Committee, who will lead our efforts over the next two years – and a new Bureau.

Distinguished delegates,

As the Secretary-General stated, a **multipolar world requires more multilateralism, not less.**

The challenges we face require **stronger and more inclusive governance, not less.**

From communities and towns, territories and countries, to the global governance of which this Committee is a part.

As Chair of the CFS, **I am proud that we have achieved global policy agreements during two very complex years.** As a Committee, let us welcome the fact that we are capable of consensus against this backdrop. That in itself is a message of hope for multilateralism.

We begin a week of intense debate in this plenary session. Let us always put the people who suffer most from hunger and malnutrition, poverty and inequalities at the **centre of our deliberations.** Only then will we achieve impact.

I count on your leadership and your generosity.

Thank you very much.