



ROME DECLARATION ON HUNGER

Declaration & UN Instrument

Adopted by The World Food Day Colloquium held in Rome, Italy in October 1982

We, the participants in the World Food Day Colloquium held in Rome in October 1982, have assessed food problems and prospects in the context of the world economic situation and adopted the following Declaration.

We believe that it is indeed possible to end world hunger by the year 2000. More than ever before, humanity possesses the resources, capital, technology and knowledge to promote development and to feed all people, both now and in the foreseeable future. By the year 2000 the entire world population can be fed and nourished.

Only a modest expenditure is needed each year – a tiny fraction of total military expenditure, which amounts to about \$650 billion a year. What is required is the political will to put first things first and to give absolute priority to freedom from hunger. This is the challenge which faces peoples and their governments. We call upon them to meet the challenge and to start now.

While recognizing the complexities and difficulties of the task, we emphasize that hope can replace despair and positive action replace negative pessimism.

We are aware that the international scene is characterized by deep recession, mounting unemployment and increasing tensions. While we do not underestimate the seriousness of difficulties facing industrialized countries, the plight of most developing countries is even more dramatic. Stagnation or decline in growth rates, falling commodity prices, adverse terms of trade, high interest rates and growing external debt aggravate the problems of poverty and hunger.

There has been a dangerous decline in international cooperation for development, precisely at the time when such cooperation is most needed. Retreat from multilateral development cooperation and strong trends towards bilateralism or even unilateral action accentuate the division on

the world, a phenomenon which has led to major world conflicts in the past.

Against this sombre background we took stock of the food situation of developing countries. While some have succeeded in increasing food production faster than population, many more have not been able to do so and hunger and malnutrition continue to afflict hundreds of millions of men, women and children.

The central importance of food stands endorsed on many occasions, most categorically and emphatically in Article 11 of the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which states that: "Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international cooperation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed to improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food..."

We are convinced by the evidence assembled by FAO in its valuable study "Agriculture: Toward 2000" and by other authoritative studies that a continuation of present policies and attitudes could prolong the shame of chronic and widespread hunger into the twenty-first century. That is why this challenge must be met.

The prospect of persistent and ever-growing inequality between and within nations, of which hunger is one manifestation, can lead to violence and political destabilization, as evidenced by recent experience.

The objective solemnly declared in 1974 by the World Food Conference of eradicating hunger and malnutrition by 1985 is far from being achieved. We feel that even the more modest objective adopted in 1980 by the UN General Assembly for the Third United Nations Development Decade of eliminating hunger and malnutrition "as soon as possible and certainly by the end of this century" may not be realised if present trends continue.

We note with satisfaction that international agreement exists as to the priority character and huge dimensions of the world food problem and that basic guidelines for national and international action have been accepted by the international community. What is needed now is action in line with commitments and pledges made or reiterated at successive high-level conferences.

The serious hunger problem in South and Southeast Asia and the dramatically deteriorating food situation in sub-Saharan Africa deserve the urgent and substantial support of the international community.

We are convinced that a major and concerted global effort to accelerate growth in developing countries, especially the less developed among them is urgently needed. A much higher priority to food production, as well as sustained efforts towards greater equity, is in the common interest of all people and all nations and is the only long-term solution.

Resumption of the momentum of growth in the industrialized world through appropriate policies is urgently needed. We are persuaded that accelerated growth in developing countries must play an important role in support of sound expansionary policies of the world economy.

We urge, as an overall target, that food production in developing countries should be at least doubled over the next two decades so as to make them self-reliant in basic foods. Their Governments should define or review existing food policy goals, assign high priority to food and agriculture and, in order to meet growing demands and redress imbalances, allocate sufficient resources to the sector.

Farming should be progressively modernized and intensified on the basis of sustained research efforts – national, regional and inter national – focussing on the productivity of food crops. Adequate incentives, including appropriate pricing policies, must be provided. Particular stress must be laid on efficient water use and expansion of irrigation as a basis for stabilizing and increasing food production. This must be undertaken in ways which con-

serve natural resources in agriculture, forestry and fisheries and avoid ecological damage which cannot be made good except at very great cost.

Food and agricultural development cannot and should not be looked upon in isolation from the whole process of social and economic development. Even high rates of growth in developing countries have not solved the problems of hunger and malnutrition. The growth process needs a new orientation to attack the social problems of those people who have been benefiting only little in recent years from general economic progress.

Hunger, unemployment and poverty go together. The rural landless and the urban jobless should be provided with opportunities for productive employment through higher rates of investment. The purchasing power of the poor must be increased, for instance, by subsidies and direct food distribution schemes.

Other essential requirements include equitable access to land, water and other natural resources; people's participation including integration of women in rural development; access to inputs, markets, services and education, training and extension; expansion of income and employment opportunities through rural work programmes and non-farm activities to counter the prevalence of hunger in rural areas.

We strongly urge that the Declaration of Principles and the Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of July 1979 should be implemented with vigour by developing countries supported fully by industrialised countries.

Not all countries can be self-sufficient in food. Through sub-regional, regional and inter-regional cooperation developing countries can achieve the objective of collective self-reliance.

The elimination of hunger and malnutrition is an essential and integral part of the New International Economic Order. We earnestly hope, therefore, that negotiations will be successfully concluded at the present session of the General Assembly

of the United Nations on a resolution to launch Global Negotiations on International Economic Cooperation.

This will give added impetus to the search for a long-term solution to the problems of hunger and malnutrition in the world in the context of overall development. These issues, however, are so vital and urgent as to brook no delay both as regards the implementation of agreed commitments and the pursuance of ongoing negotiations in other fora.

We have noted with great concern that summit pronouncements in favour of the elimination of protection which particularly affects agricultural exports of developing countries have not been borne out in practice. We urge that negotiations aimed at concerted phasing out to tariff and non-tariff barriers to agricultural exports of developing countries be undertaken. We strongly recommend that the forthcoming GATT Ministerial Meeting make a significant beginning in this direction.

We note with regret that agreements reached under the UNCTAD Integrated Programme of Commodities have not been followed up by successful negotiations. However, we consider that the stabilization of prices at remunerative levels is essential for the success of a food and agricultural strategy. To this end, we urge intensification of efforts to negotiate commodity agreements.

Efforts to conclude an International Grains Arrangement, which includes adequate food security provisions, should be resumed with a view to reaching agreement as soon as possible. National food security reserves and infrastructure in developing countries, which are an essential component of world food security, should be built up with international assistance. The international community should help developing countries to take advantage of currently abundant world grain supplies to build-up national, regional or sub-regional stocks. More food aid should be provided, on a stable and predictable basis, particularly through international channels, not just to meet emergencies, but to

promote development, care being taken to avoid disincentives to domestic food production.

We urge developed countries and others in a position to do so to increase massively their contribution to general development assistance and especially to provide increased assistance to food and agriculture. Governments should take into account FAO's estimate that external assistance requirements for food and agriculture will increase four-fold in real terms by the end of the century.

We emphasize the need for an increasing share of external assistance to be provided through multilateral institutions. International financial institutions, in their assistance to food and agriculture, should cover more of the local and recurring costs. They should also refrain from imposing conditions on pricing, tax and subsidy policies, which would aggravate poverty and hunger and lead to political instability.

The ultimate purpose of development is the human being. Hence human development is both a means and an end of the struggle to increase food production and eliminate hunger.

We commend non-governmental organizations, which have consistently drawn attention to the problems of hunger and poverty and urge them to intensify their efforts to promote solutions along the lines indicated in the present Declaration.

We recognize the particular responsibilities and lead role of FAO in the fight against hunger. We are confident that FAO and other concerned organizations will be able to respond effectively to the tasks that lie ahead. We accordingly invite the director-general of FAO to draw the attention of FAO's governing bodies and the heads of other international organizations and policy makers at national and international levels to the present Declaration.

We hope that policy makers and all people to whom this Declaration is addressed will rise to the challenge and display the necessary vision, courage and determination.