



ROME DECLARATION ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

We, the Heads of State and Government,¹ or our representatives, gathered at the World Food Summit at the invitation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.

We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015.

We consider it intolerable that more than 800 million people throughout the world, and particularly in developing countries, do not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. This situation is unacceptable. Food supplies have increased substantially, but constraints on access to food and continuing inadequacy of household and national incomes to purchase food, instability of supply and demand, as well as natural and man-made disasters, prevent basic food needs from being fulfilled. The problems of hunger and food insecurity have global dimensions and are likely to persist, and even increase dramatically in some regions, unless urgent, determined and concerted action is taken, given the anticipated increase in the world's population and the stress on natural resources.

We reaffirm that a peaceful, stable and enabling political, social and economic environment is the essential foundation which will enable States to give adequate priority to food security and poverty eradication. Democracy, promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, and the full and equal participation of men and women are essential for achieving sustainable food security for all.

Poverty is a major cause of food insecurity

and sustainable progress in poverty eradication is critical to improve access to food. Conflict, terrorism, corruption and environmental degradation also contribute significantly to food insecurity. Increased food production, including staple food, must be undertaken. This should happen within the framework of sustainable management of natural resources, elimination of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, and early stabilization of the world population. We acknowledge the fundamental contribution to food security by women, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the need to ensure equality between men and women. Revitalization of rural areas must also be a priority to enhance social stability and help redress the excessive rate of rural-urban migration confronting many countries.

We emphasize the urgency of taking action now to fulfill our responsibility to achieve food security for present and future generations. Attaining food security is a complex task for which the primary responsibility rests with individual governments. They have to develop an enabling environment and have policies that ensure peace, as well as social, political and economic stability and equity and gender equality. We express our deep concern over the persistence of hunger which, on such a scale, constitutes a threat both to national societies and, through a variety of ways, to the stability of the international community itself. Within the global framework, governments should also cooperate actively with one another and with United Nations organizations, financial institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and public and private sectors, on programmes directed toward the achievement of food security for all.

Food should not be used as an instrument for political and economic pressure. We reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and solidarity as well as the

Declaration & UN Instrument

*Adopted by the
World Food Summit
at Rome, Italy, 13-17
November 1996*

¹ When "Government" is used, it means as well the European Community within its areas of competence.

necessity of refraining from unilateral measures not in accordance with the international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that endanger food security.

We recognize the need to adopt policies conducive to investment in human resource development, research and infrastructure for achieving food security. We must encourage generation of employment and incomes, and promote equitable access to productive and financial resources. We agree that trade is a key element in achieving food security. We agree to pursue food trade and overall trade policies that will encourage our producers and consumers to utilize available resources in an economically sound and sustainable manner. We recognize the importance for food security of sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development in low as well as high potential areas. We acknowledge the fundamental role of farmers, fishers, foresters, indigenous people and their communities, and all other people involved in the food sector, and of their organizations, supported by effective research and extension, in attaining food security. Our sustainable development policies will promote full participation and empowerment of people, especially women, an equitable distribution of income, access to health care and education, and opportunities for youth. Particular attention should be given to those who cannot produce or procure enough food for an adequate diet, including those affected by war, civil strife, natural disaster or climate related ecological changes. We are conscious of the need for urgent action to combat pests, drought, and natural resource degradation including desertification, overfishing and erosion of biological diversity.

We are determined to make efforts to mobilize, and optimize the allocation and utilization of, technical and financial resources from all sources, including external debt relief for developing countries, to reinforce national actions to implement sustainable food security policies.

Convinced that the multifaceted character of food security necessitates concerted national action, and effective international

efforts to supplement and reinforce national action, we make the following commitments:

- we will ensure an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of women and men, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all;
- we will implement policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality and improving physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food and its effective utilization;
- we will pursue participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development policies and practices in high and low potential areas, which are essential to adequate and reliable food supplies at the household, national, regional and global levels, and combat pests, drought and desertification, considering the multifunctional character of agriculture;
- we will strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system;
- we will endeavour to prevent and be prepared for natural disasters and man-made emergencies and to meet transitory and emergency food requirements in ways that encourage recovery, rehabilitation, development and a capacity to satisfy future needs;
- we will promote optimal allocation and use of public and private investments to foster human resources, sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems, and rural development, in high and low potential areas;
- we will implement, monitor, and follow-up this Plan of Action at all levels in cooperation with the international community.

We pledge our actions and support to implement the World Food Summit Plan of Action.