

“The world doesn’t need more of the same medicine”

Joint Declaration addressed to Governments on World Food Crisis.

The undersigned social movements and civil society organizations welcome the decision of the UN Human Rights Council, upon request of the new UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to food, to hold a special session on the negative impact of the world food crisis on the realization of the right to food, which took place on May 22nd in Geneva.

We express hope that the session helped to ensure that the Human Rights Council, and the UN Human Rights system as a whole, will closely follow the debate. It was also a crucial step toward increasing recognition of and accountability for massive violations of the right to adequate food worldwide, which are at the root of the present crisis, and toward bringing issues of international and national policy coherence and full observation of international human rights law and principles into the ongoing international debate, and into the preparation for the High Level Conference to be held in Rome, from the 3rd to the 5th of June, on Food Security, Bioenergy and Climate Change.

Social movements and civil society organizations have repeatedly alerted states and intergovernmental organizations, in relation to the negative impact on the realization of the right to adequate food and other human rights, as well as on national food and nutritional security, of international policies leading to the reduction of governments' capacity to regulate their national agricultural and food security policies undermining Food Sovereignty.

We, differently from the diagnosis presented by the UN at the creation of the UN Task Force on the Global Food Crisis, see the present crisis as deeply rooted in decades of misguided international policies, which have failed to create and maintain an enabling environment for states to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to adequate food for their citizens, as they almost ignored the need to facilitate access to productive resources to the rural poor; leading to reduced investment in the agricultural sector, especially in traditional and peasant diversified agriculture, and deregulated international agricultural trade. These policies were implemented under the guidance of the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank), which are now called on to play a leading role in the task force, and, more recently, under the guidance of the WTO.

There is a need for urgent international action to fulfil the Right to Adequate Food of the most vulnerable populations directly affected by the crisis. But this should not be limited to food assistance and establishment of safety nets and rights-based minimum income programmes. This urgent action should include policy measures that guarantee immediate protection against factors that are clearly aggravating the crisis, such as mega development projects that lead to massive eviction of traditional populations and peasants, without adequate reparation measures; the increased demand for the production of agrofuels, especially based on the proposed quotas established by the EU and the US; and the speculation on the commodities “futures” market.

The world does not need more of the same medicine. We alert the international public opinion of the potential further negative impact of some of the medium and long term proposals furthered by the UN, such as the promotion of capital-intensive agriculture in Africa, the so-called “new green revolution” and the acceleration of the trade deregulation process, with the conclusion of the Doha round. If these recommendations are put in place, it would mean implementing more of the same policies which are a significant part of the structural causes of the present food crisis, and of the accelerated climate changes. The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for development (IAASTD), carried out by 400 scientists and adopted by 60 countries in April 2008, confirms our worries and calls for a stop in the promotion and expansion of the agro industrial agricultural model.

This crisis demonstrates that the all-pervasive global market will not guarantee food security or the right to food. Social movements and civil society organizations have been calling for a food production system based on the principles of Food Sovereignty and human rights, with special attention to the right to adequate food and to participation and access to productive resources, such as land, water and seeds, among others. Several governments from Latin America and the Caribbean associated themselves with this call, in the Managua Declaration of the Presidential Summit on Food Sovereignty, held in Managua, on May 7th.

In preparation for the upcoming High Level Conference in Rome, we urge governments and intergovernmental organizations to:

1. Ensure that any coordinating mechanisms created to deal with the present food emergency have the participation of representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Food, as well as strong representation from the social movements that are composed by, and civil society organizations that work with, those most affected by human rights violations, especially the right to adequate food.
2. Ensure that the promotion and protection of the Human Right to Food will be at the centre of all international efforts to overcome the World Food Crisis, recognising that violations of the RTF are at the root of it and have to be addressed and redressed.
3. Take the necessary steps to adopt, without further ado, the optional protocol on the ICESCR.
4. Agree at the Human Rights Council, as well at the FAO High Level Conference, on national and international strategies that explicitly recognize and implement the Human Right to Food as a binding obligation on most UN member countries.
5. Agree on the principle of “do no harm” for any international policy that affects the food security situation of communities or countries: all hunger-generating policies must be stopped.
6. Impose an immediate moratorium on the expansion of agribusiness-led agriculture.
7. Take into account and fully implement the Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food, approved by the FAO Council in 2004, and the “Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement” (A/HRC/4/18), issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate Housing.

8. Request the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the kinds of international policies violate the RTF, and HR in general, and to define a set of criteria to make sure that international policies, such as those in the field of trade, finance and development assistance, will not violate HR treaties, with special attention to the right to adequate food.
9. Request the HRC to take all necessary measures to investigate the responsibility of state and non state actors in specific situations that have led to the aggravation of the food crisis, such as speculation, food hoarding, etc., adopting the necessary measures required to reverse any irregularity.
10. Request the HRC to investigate the issue of peasant rights, as already mentioned by the former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, by mandating its advisory committee to conduct a first study to better identify the needs for specific entitlements of peasants as one of the most vulnerable groups to HR and RTF violations as well as to identify gaps in the protection of these rights and entitlements, and concrete proposals to address and redress these gaps.
11. Take immediate measures to support national governments in guaranteeing that the victims of acute hunger, as well as chronic hunger, are assisted and supported in their quest to survive and to recover the capacity to produce or acquire the food or means necessary to feed themselves in dignity. This must be made the effective priority zero at the international and national level, with the allocation of adequate funds.
12. Guarantee full participation of social movements and civil society representatives in the June Rome Conference, allowing for oral interventions throughout the event, as has been the practice in FAO in recent years.

And that as a concrete result of the meetings, States:

13. Recommit to meet their obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law, taking urgent action to impose regulations on the present expansion of the market-led agricultural liberalization process, to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of the people, with special attention to the promotion of the human right to feed oneself, including the access to productive resources, within the framework of Food Sovereignty.
14. Ensure coherence of all food-related national and international policies with the obligations under the right to food. In particular, policies on agriculture and fishery, trade and investment, and development and energy should contribute to promote and never undermine the full realisation of the right to adequate food. Impose an immediate moratorium on the goals for agrofuel production, to avoid a further deterioration of the present hunger crisis. All development policies should be conducive to the promotion of Human Rights.
15. Define the promotion and protection of the Human Right to Food as one of the Strategic Objectives of the FAO, in the context of the ongoing reform process.
16. Implement measures to fully support small farmer and peasant based sustainable, agroecological diversified food production, at the global level.
17. Guarantee that the discussion of alternatives for climate change are carried out in a fully participatory process, at all levels, and that the alternatives chosen take into account the precautionary principle and the need to effectively socially and economically include the most excluded and poorest.
18. Ensure that international food intervention reserves should be guaranteed on the basis of expected needs, independent of price.