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Top UN official calls for bolstered global governance system for world food security



Current global crises demand decisive action

6 June 2009 – A strengthened global governance system is crucial to ensure world food security, the head of the United Nations agriculture arm said today, calling for changes to be made to the parts of the international trade system that led to increased hunger and poverty.

“What is important today is to realize that the time of talk has long past,” Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), [said](#) at the opening session of the World Grain Forum, which opened today in St. Petersburg, Russia.

“Now is the time for action. The food crisis has taught us that to defeat hunger, we have to deal with its root causes and not to continue coping with the consequences of past mistakes,” he added.

The two-day gathering on global food security and the world's grain market, first proposed by Russia at last year's meeting of the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries, has drawn agriculture ministers and officials from over 50 countries.

Mr. Diouf pointed out today that between 2006 and 2008, international prices of basic food commodities surged some 60 per cent, while the price of grain doubled.

At present, average food prices are still 17 per cent higher than they were in 2006 and 24 per cent higher in 2005.

Soaring prices have driven an additional 115 million people into hunger, and the FAO chief cautioned that the current financial turmoil is exacerbating the situation and could push over 100 million people into food insecurity.

FAO's most recent report on food insecurity, released last December, estimated that the number of undernourished people worldwide is close to the 1 billion mark.

As of last month, 31 countries – 20 in Africa, nine in Asia and the Near East and two in Central America and the Caribbean – in are facing a food crisis and need emergency help, according to the agency.

“This cannot be acceptable. How can we explain to people of good sense and good faith this dramatic situation in a state of abundance of international resources and when trillions of US dollars are being spent to stimulate the world economy?” Mr. Diouf asked, calling for increasing funding to help developing countries boost their agricultural output through investment in rural infrastructure and ensuring access to modern inputs.

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