

At World Food Prize ceremony, UN Secretary-General calls for new approaches to combat hunger



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivers keynote address at the 2012 World Food Prize laureate award ceremony. UN Photo

18 October 2012 – Innovative approaches and technologies as well as a strong political will from countries are essential to combat hunger, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon stressed tonight, at an event honouring the latest winner of the World Food Prize.

Ending hunger in our lifetimes “calls for harnessing the creativity of scientists and economists,” Mr. Ban said. “It requires developing new approaches and technologies to respond to climate change, water scarcity and desertification.”

The Secretary-General was [speaking](#) at the 2012 World Food Prize laureate award ceremony held in the state of Iowa, in the United States.

In our world of plenty, no one should live in hunger. No child should have his growth stunted by malnutrition. No child should have her opportunity for a better life curtailed even before she is born, because her mother was undernourished.

This year's winner is an Israeli scientist, Dr. Daniel Hillel, with the Prize recognizing his efforts in implementing a new mode of bringing water to crops in arid and dry regions, known as 'micro-irrigation.'

According to the website for the event, the international prize, created in 1986 and sponsored by a local businessman and philanthropist, recognizes, "without regard to race, religion, nationality, or political beliefs," the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food.

The award, it adds, recognizes contributions in any field involved in the world food supply, including food and agriculture science and technology, manufacturing, marketing, nutrition, poverty alleviation and political leadership, amongst others.

In his remarks, Mr. Ban praised this year's winner, Dr. Hillel, for his work, which "has transcended boundaries to help millions of farmers grow more crop per drop of water in some of the driest places on earth."

Mr. Hillel's drip irrigation system is "making the desert bloom" on six million hectares of arid land in more than 30 countries, the UN chief noted. "His achievement started as a technical innovation, but it has made a signal contribution to global harmony, stability and peace," he said.

Initiatives like Mr. Hillel's, he added, are required to tackle the food insecurity that is being experienced in many parts of the world, due to a combination of droughts, a rise in food prices, and financial instability in various regions. However, Mr. Ban underlined that the current crisis is different from the 2007-2008 crisis, when global food prices increased dramatically causing political and economic instability.

"We have learned important lessons. More countries have put safety nets in place. There has been less panic buying, and fewer trade restrictions," Mr. Ban said. "Nations are also investing more in agriculture, and strengthening international cooperation." In spite of these efforts, much more remains to be done, the UN chief added.

The issue of food security is high on the UN agenda. Last week saw the release of the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012 (SOFI), which was jointly published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) and the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)).

In addition to finding that almost 870 million people, or one in eight, are suffering from chronic malnutrition, the report showed a sharp decline in the number of undernourished people over the

past two decades, while also warning that immediate action is still needed to tackle hunger particularly in developing countries.

It also found that Africa is the only region where malnutrition rates have risen over the past 20 years. Africa's western Sahel region, in particular, is experiencing high levels of food insecurity, Mr. Ban noted in his speech in Iowa.

The Secretary-General also highlighted various UN initiatives to help those who are most vulnerable obtain access not just to food, but also to land, finance, infrastructure and markets required to ensure food security such as the Movement to Scale Up Nutrition, which seeks to provide adequate nutrition to children under two and their mothers and the Zero Hunger Challenge, which aims to ensure access to food, end childhood stunting and double the productivity and income of smallholder farmers.

“In our world of plenty, no one should live in hunger. No child should have his growth stunted by malnutrition. No child should have her opportunity for a better life curtailed even before she is born, because her mother was undernourished,” Mr. Ban said.

On Monday, speaking at the opening session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome, the FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, [said](#) that targets for reducing the proportion of hungry people around the world by half can still be reached if countries step up their efforts to reduce hunger.

Set up in 1974 and reporting to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the CFS, an intergovernmental body, serves as a forum for review and follow up of food security policies.

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