

## Global food security takes centre stage at high-level UN event



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses meeting as Hillary Rodham Clinton (R) and Prime Minister Hasina listen

26 September 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton today brought together representatives from 100 countries to discuss ways to boost global food security, a vital issue in a world where one sixth of humanity suffers from chronic hunger.

“There is more than enough food in the world, yet today, more than one billion people are hungry. This is unacceptable,” Mr. Ban said in his opening **remarks** to the event at UN Headquarters on partnering for food security.

He said last year’s food crisis brought home to everyone what experts have been saying for years – that the world’s food systems are in crisis, that they are failing too many people and many of the poorer nations.

The UN system responded with “rapid and robust” support when the crisis hit, he said, noting for example how the World Food Programme (**WFP**) built up food and nutrition safety nets and raised record funding to reach the world’s most vulnerable people.

In addition, the Secretary-General set up a high-level task force – bringing together the heads of many UN agencies, as well as leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (**IMF**) – to promote a unified response to the crisis.

“But the food crisis is far from over,” he stated. “Ever more people are denied the food they need because prices are stubbornly high, because their purchasing power has fallen due to the economic crisis, or because rains have failed and reserve stocks of grain have been eaten.”

In July, leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) leading industrialized countries pledged \$20 billion at their summit in L’Aquila, Italy, and agreed that programmes must be country-led, that approaches must be comprehensive and that assistance must be strategically coordinated. They also agreed that multilateral agencies must have a strong role, and national efforts must be supported by a sustained commitment of financial resources.

“Now is the time to demonstrate to food-insecure nations and communities that we want to build on these principles, develop a roadmap for action and secure tangible results,” said Mr. Ban.

He added that he wanted to see this momentum – with its emphasis on the principles and on country-led processes – carried forward during the Rome Summit on Food Security in November.

Mrs. Clinton welcomed the gathering at the UN as an opportunity to exchange ideas and join forces against one of today's major challenges, stating that "this is an issue that affects all of us."

She said the efforts by the US, which has pledged a minimum of \$3.5 billion over the next three years to strengthen agriculture worldwide, will be guided by five principles, among which are addressing the underlying causes of hunger and improving coordination at the country, regional and global levels.

The importance of a comprehensive approach to tackle the food crisis was also highlighted today in the high-level debate of the General Assembly.

**Thailand's** Prime Minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, said his country understood well the challenges developing countries are facing in dealing with issues such as hunger, poverty and energy shortages, all of which have been exacerbated by the ongoing financial crisis, and is prepared to share its experiences with others.

"As a major agricultural economy, Thailand stands ready to contribute to the solution of the world food and energy crises. We are a major food exporter with strong experience and capability in developing alternative energy, especially biodiesel and ethanol.

"We aim to ensure a balance between growing energy and food crops so that both needs are sufficiently addressed," he added.

Also taking up the issues of food and energy security was Hor Namhong, **Cambodia's** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who noted that the rise in oil prices last year had prompted several countries to pursue the production of bio-energy crops as an alternative source of energy. This resulted in reducing the available cultivated land – amid a growing world population – thereby increasing the demand for more food.

"The combination of those realities underlines the importance for a comprehensive approach to tackle the problem of food crisis on our planet," he stated, cautioning against any short-term solution to the energy problem which would have harmful consequences on global food security.

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