



# IRELAND

**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of**

**UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP**

**23 January 2009**

**New York**

**Agenda Item 2:**

**Unstable Food Prices and the Linkage**

**with Food and Nutrition Security**

**Delivered by  
Ambassador Paul Kavanagh  
Permanent Representative of Ireland  
to the United Nations**

*Check against delivery*

**PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6934 FAX 212 752-4726  
ireland@un.int**

Mr Chairman,

\*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the outset I would like to thank the participants in today's discussion for their informative presentations and for the analysis presented in the discussion papers.

The global food crisis was finally brought to the front pages of our newspapers in 2008 as food prices peaked to their highest levels in years. Although since then there has been a marked decline in prices, there still remains a growing global crisis in food security.

Although food prices have begun to stabilise in recent months they remain 76% higher than they were in 2002 and beyond the reach of the urban poor in particular. At the same time, Ireland would like to underline that what we are faced with goes far beyond the question of food prices. We are in fact faced with a global *hunger* crisis. It is clear that the rural poor – smallholder and women farmers - cannot grow enough food for their own needs and are unable to benefit from the higher market prices.

The recent price escalations have only served to highlight what is an ongoing underlying crisis; a 'silent Tsunami' of hunger. It is an affront to our common humanity that now, all but 10 years into the twenty first century, almost 1 billion people are suffering from hunger.

### **Ireland's Commitment to Hunger**

Ireland has committed to placing hunger eradication as one of the cornerstones of our overseas aid programme. Many of you will recall last September the presentation, here at UN Headquarters, of the Report of Ireland's Hunger Task Force to the UN Secretary General and the Irish Government. This Task Force, which brought together a group of internationally renowned experts in the areas of agricultural development and food security, was established following a commitment by the Government to place hunger and food security at the centre of our efforts to eradicate poverty and assist global development.

The Report has been commended as a model of clarity and it has been warmly welcomed, nationally and internationally. It is, in short, a wake-up call. It pulls no punches. It makes for

difficult reading for those of us in Government. It focussed on three specific thematic areas which, if addressed, should have real impact in reducing and eradicating the scourge of hunger:

- Increasing smallholder agricultural productivity in Africa, underlining that the vast majority of African smallholders are women.
- Targeting maternal and infant under nutrition
- Taking global leadership actions to address hunger, including by making hunger a priority particularly by ensuring that donor and recipient governments fulfil their commitments to its eradication.

Elevating hunger to a global priority will reflect the significance of the first of the Millennium Development Goals. The Irish Report underlines that we should be accountable at national and international level to ensure that donor and partner governments fulfil their commitments to the eradication of hunger.

On Wednesday of this week, the Irish Government responded to the recommendations of the Report, acknowledging that it provides us with an excellent framework to guide our national response to global hunger and food insecurity in the years ahead.

As one example, the Report recommended that 20% of ODA be earmarked for hunger. We accept this target in principle and we are making real progress towards achieving it. We are currently allocating significant ODA resources to the fight against global hunger by supporting programmes or projects which are directly or indirectly related to hunger reduction, including agriculture, food security, nutrition security and other related areas. We will focus on quality programmes and making a difference. We will take a strong leadership and advocacy role on the world stage to ensure that the MDG hunger target is reached and, if possible, exceeded.

In response to another recommendation, the Government of Ireland this week appointed Mr Kevin Farrell to act as Ireland's Hunger Envoy. Mr Farrell, who has spent a long and distinguished career working for the World Food Programme, will

assist and advise Ireland in our efforts at regional and international levels to reduce hunger and food insecurity and ensure that we move forward and implement key recommendations of the Irish Hunger Task Force Report.

Mr Chairman,

We can be under no illusion as to the seriousness of the situation which the international community is facing. For example, it can be noted that when the final draft of the Irish Hunger Task Force Report was ready in June 2008 **862 million people did not have enough food**

When the Report was presented to the UN Secretary General and members of the Irish Government last September **925 million people did not have enough food**

**And today, almost 1 billion people do not have enough food.**

Last year saw the onset of one of the most serious financial crises in history. Its repercussions have affected every country in the world, pushing many countries into recession. It is clear that 2009 will also be a very difficult year as global growth slows and unemployment figures rise.

In these challenging times, we must remember the vulnerability of the poorest who are always those who suffer the most. The entire international community must play its part in efforts to address their needs. One sixth of the world's population lives on less than \$1 a day and one billion people do not have enough to eat. This should give us some perspective on our own current economic difficulties. We have a moral obligation to help these people. It will be challenging and will require a concerted international response if we are to achieve the first MDG. We need to, and can, rise to this challenge.

In the view of Ireland, therefore, a global and coordinated response to this problem is essential. We are grateful to the Secretary General and the entire United Nations System, for the leadership they have provided in convening the High Level Task Force on Global Food Security. The Comprehensive Framework for Action has

provided a basis for concerted action from the global to the local, bridging the short term and long terms responses, so that the both the acute and the chronic problems of food insecurity can be addressed. We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General David Nabarro for the strong leadership he has provided in this area.

We are also strongly supportive of the establishment of a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security. Such a partnership must mobilise political and financial commitment to ensure that progress in addressing the global hunger crisis is sustained. It should build on, and be consistent with, existing global and regional arrangements for intergovernmental work and not undermine existing national and regional activities and initiatives focused on achieving hunger reduction and food security.

It must hold all stakeholders accountable for their actions and to ensure that they deliver on their commitments. This partnership must be broad based and include the perspectives of developing countries, as well as development partners. It should involve the United Nations System as well as other regional organisations. In essences it should harness and provide leadership for our collective efforts towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal.

We would like to thank and commend the Government of Spain for hosting the Madrid Conference on Food Security for All next week. This meeting will provide an important opportunity for the international community to take concrete steps towards making this global partnership a reality, and taking action in response to this crisis.

One of the key messages of the Irish Hunger Task Force Report was that hunger happens because it is allowed to happen. The international community can tackle this issue. We have the resources, we have the technology – we know what needs to be done. We must simply summon the **global political will** to turn our commitments and policy positions into coordinated action. We look forward to 2009 as a year of action.