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42th Plenary Meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

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Per Pinstrup-Andersen
HLPE Chairperson

*Statement on the occasion of the Opening Session
("Setting the Stage")*

Madam Chair, Ambassador Verburg,
Esteemed Heads of Agencies,
UN Secretary-General Special Representative,
Honourable members and participants of CFS,

It is now two years since I took up my duties as Chair of the Steering Committee of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE). During these two years, the HLPE has produced 3 reports, one of which – the one on water – will be presented and discussed at this meeting. At your request, we also completed a note on critical and emerging issues, and we have started the work on two new reports (Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition, including the role of livestock; and Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition). This represents a lot of work and a remarkable amount of pro-bono time, dedication and motivation for everyone involved in our endeavour, which is to provide the best possible evidence-based analysis and advice to underpin CFS works.

Water for Food Security and Nutrition

The main findings of the report on Water for Food Security and Nutrition will be presented by Lyla Mehta this afternoon but I would like to make a few points here.

Water and food are the two most fundamental basic needs of humans. In New York last month, governments of the world agreed to a set of 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030. Water for Food Security and Nutrition is linked to many of them and contributes directly to two of them:

- *SDG 2* – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; and
- *SDG 6* – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

A debate on water, food security and nutrition is very timely. It gives an example of how to organize a discussion across the goals, on concrete ways forward on “how to reach” important objectives and targets: what should be done, and what each actor should do.

The report aims to respond to two premises:

1. Safe drinking water and sanitation are fundamental to good nutrition, health and dignity for all. According to the most recent data from WHO and UNICEF, 2.5 billion people still lack improved sanitation facilities, and 768 million still rely on unsafe drinking water sources. This is fundamentally undermining social and economic development and causing very serious health problems.
2. Water of sufficient quantity and quality is essential for agricultural production and for the processing and preparation of food. Irrigated agriculture accounts for 70 percent of all water withdrawals globally. Ensuring food security under scarce water resources given increasing competition for water is a very serious challenge.

The report depicts the pathways between water and food security and nutrition and proposes ways for all concerned actors:

- to improve water management,
- to improve management of agricultural and food systems for more efficient use of water, and
- to improve water governance for FSN,

Our analysis highlights seven main domains for action ranging from sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems, to promoting inclusive and effective governance.

Safeguarding water for the dignity, health, and food and nutrition security of everyone on the planet is one of humanity’ biggest challenges. There are many different contexts and a diversity of possible approaches and interventions, but we believe that there is a fundamental unity of purpose. This report is now in your hands to help your debates, to serve as a comprehensive starting point.

Thanks

I wish to recognize the persons who contributed to this report, including:

- My Steering Committee colleagues and specially Michel Pimbert who led the Steering Committee's work on this report;
- The Project Team, and especially the Project Team Leader Lyla Mehta;
- The external peer reviewers;
- A very large number of experts and institutions who commented extensively both on the terms of reference and on a first draft of the report;
- Last but not least, the HLPE Secretariat and in particular Vincent Gitz who, as usual, played a key role in the completion of the work.

Let me also thank the resource partners of the HLPE Trust Fund, since 2010: Australia, the European Union, France, Ireland, Norway, the United Kingdom, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, and especially a warm thanks to those who are currently renewing their contributions or considering to join the group of contributors.

Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition, including the role of livestock (SADL)

Let me briefly turn to one of the assignments you have given us: namely "*Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition, including the role of livestock*". Last year, the CFS was visionary in choosing this topic, which is closely linked SDG2 "*End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*".

Scientists are generally reluctant to put unfinished work under public scrutiny and critics: "*Just leave us alone until we finish the research and then we will tell you what we found*". In contrast, in the HLPE, we believe that scientific inclusiveness and openness is critical to the quality of the final product. The HLPE is the only science-policy interface I am familiar with which is openly releasing interim drafts or scoping documents. This report is no exception. The first and still incomplete draft report is currently posted on our website. The deadline for comments and suggestions is the end of the month. At its next meeting 2-4 November the Steering Committee will carefully consider the comments and suggestions of this consultation.

Let me repeat: This report-in-the-making and the subsequent debates in CFS cannot be timelier to support all stakeholders and all countries to engage themselves into the right tracks towards achieving SDG2.

Nutrition

When I took office as HLPE Chair, you had just requested us to produce a note on critical and emerging issues on food security and nutrition. In this note, we highlighted a number of issues of critical importance, and amongst those, the one of the "triple burden of malnutrition" stood out:

Worldwide, populations are suffering from deficiencies in dietary energy intake, nutrient deficiencies and obesity, often co-existing in the same country and sometimes in the same households.

Understanding the causes of this situation is key to develop appropriate action to improve nutrition.

In particular, as pointed out by the ICN2, we need a better understanding about how to change food systems for health and nutrition. We should build on the accomplishments of the ICN2.

Understanding how food systems can contribute to healthier food and nutrition outcomes was perhaps the issue most consistently raised by participants in the scientific inquiry we organized to prepare the note on emerging issues I mentioned earlier. We can only praise the CFS for scaling-up its work on nutrition, in the follow-up of our note, and in the aftermath of the ICN2. We stand ready to quickly start the work on this topic to underpin the work by CFS.

In conclusion, ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030 as called for by the SDGs, will require an enhanced effort by us all. The HLPE stands ready to continue to bring to CFS independent evidence on topics identified by you.

Madam Chair, honourable members and participants, it has been an honour to serve the CFS, during my two-year tenure as chairperson of the Steering Committee of the HLPE. A new Steering Committee will take over at the end of this meeting. I wish the 15 members success in their mission, to provide the best possible evidence-based advice to the CFS. Thank you very much to you all for your encouragement and support.