



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See  
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
at the 25th Session of the Human Rights Council - Item 3:  
Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food  
*Geneva, 10 March 2014*

Mr. President, my Delegation welcomes the opportunity to address this Council on the urgent need for governments and the global society better to respect, protect, facilitate, and fulfill the human right to food. We are deeply grateful to the outgoing Special Rapporteur for his significant efforts in this regard and express the sincere hope that additional progress will be made in order to ensure that the right to food is not “reduced to a right not to starve” and will truly be acknowledged as “an inclusive right to an adequate diet and all the nutritional elements” needed “to live a healthy and active life, and the means to access them.”<sup>1</sup>

The international community has indeed made progress in addressing food security. On the occasion of World Food Day 2013<sup>2</sup>, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization reported that, since the end of the Second World War, the availability of food per person has increased by more than 40%. It further advised, however, that hunger still afflicts more than 840 million people but is much less evident since it persists mainly among those living in developing countries. This type of hunger manifests itself as a “slow death” caused by under-nutrition, depriving children of opportunities and the achievement of such developmental milestones as growth within normal standards, neuromotor development, and school performance, all of which are taken for granted by well-nourished people who live in high-income countries... “this is a real scandal.”<sup>3</sup>

Mr. President, in his Message for the most recent World Food Day, Pope Francis strongly asserted that “hunger and malnutrition can never be considered a normal event to which one must become accustomed, as if it were part of the system.”<sup>4</sup> In order to break this vicious cycle, we need to take structural measures such as the enactment of framework laws at the national level and the development of just food policies. We also need well-developed processes, including implementation and monitoring of policies as well as adequate resource allocations. Finally, we must carefully analyze

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/.../A-HRC-19-59\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/.../A-HRC-19-59_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Mr. José Graziano Da Silva, Director General, FAO, “*La sicurezza alimentare è la sfida del futuro*,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, giovedì 19 settembre 2013.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131208\\_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/messages/food/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131016\\_messaggio-giornata-alimentazione\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/food/documents/papa-francesco_20131016_messaggio-giornata-alimentazione_en.html)

outcomes and impact based on statistics related to hunger and under-nutrition and on indicators related to the availability of food, sufficient revenue and affordable prices to buy proper nourishment for families and the more vulnerable members of society.

In a certain sense, Mr. President, Pope Francis has outlined a “roadmap” aimed at further advancing the full implementation of the right to food. “Something has to change, in ourselves, in our mentality, in our society,” he urged, proposing that “an important step is to bring down, with determination, the barriers of individualism, of being shut-in on ourselves, of the slavery of profit at all cost.”<sup>5</sup> My Delegation, therefore, suggests that the achievement of the right to food requires social solidarity among all peoples, in addition to the legal and policy-related safeguards already established by this Council.

At the national level, this requires adequate public and private investment to enable small-scale farmers to increase productivity, to attain adequate revenue surplus to improve the conditions under which they farm and to be able count on long-term prospects of sufficient income to support their families. Special attention will be needed to facilitate the empowerment and participation of rural women to enhance agriculture and rural development. With regard to the private sector, we must strive for more equitable distribution of resources, one that does not disadvantage small, local food producers. In the provision of humanitarian assistance, access to food and resources by affected populations needs to be assured both within and across borders. Development assistance should include agricultural components so that the right to produce and market food can be assured without discrimination.

Solidarity at the international level is equally important in efforts to guarantee the right to food. The agreement reached in Bali, during the ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization “on public stockholding for food security purposes” is on the same line and is a clear example of how multilateralism can regain its central role in addressing new problems, tackling new opportunities, and, most importantly, promoting freer and more equitable trade, not as an end in itself, but as one of the many approaches to ending poverty for all. The implementation of this *interim* agreement would provide a more secure, stable and equitable access to food for countries that need it.

During the current International Year of Family Farming, Mr. President, my Delegation would urge this Council to include, as a special component of its efforts to advance and preserve the human right to food, “education in solidarity and in a way of life that overcomes the ‘throw away culture’ and really puts every person and his/her dignity at the center, as is characteristic of the family.”<sup>6</sup>

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*