

**Tripartite Technical Workshop on the Impact  
of the Food Price Crisis on Decent Work**Geneva  
5–6 March 2009

---

Report

**Background to the meeting**

1. The Governing Body at its 303rd Session in November 2008 authorized the holding of a tripartite technical workshop on the impact of the food price crisis on decent work to give effect to a resolution adopted at the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2008. The purpose of the workshop was threefold: (a) to take account of the work of the United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis (HLTF); (b) to share with other UN agencies the expertise of the ILO tripartite partners on rural employment and poverty reduction; and (c) to contribute to an informed discussion within the UN on the social and employment impact of food prices on decent work.
2. The technical workshop was held at ILO headquarters in Geneva on 5–6 March 2009. It was attended by the representatives of 12 Governments, nine Employer members and nine Worker members as well as representatives of the following organizations: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); World Bank (WB); World Food Programme (WFP); World Trade Organization (WTO); International Trade Centre (ITC); the International Organisation of Employers (IOE); the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC); the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the International Cooperative Alliance.
3. The technical workshop was jointly sponsored by the ILO Sectoral Activities Department and the Employment Sector.
4. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings.

**5 March 2009 – Preliminary meeting of ILO constituents**

5. Mr George Dragnich, ILO Executive Director, Social Dialogue, opened the tripartite technical workshop by noting that it was part of the ILO response, and indeed of the wider UN response, to the economic and social crises now facing the world. The ILO had much to contribute to the work of the HLTF and the implementation of the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). The conclusions on the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction adopted at the June 2008 International Labour Conference were highly relevant in terms of building longer term resilience. They focused on medium- to long-term solutions, such as:

- 
- the promotion of diversified economic activities in rural areas, through local economic development initiatives and skills and vocational training;
  - the building of social protection systems to reduce vulnerability and strengthen productive capacity;
  - the promotion of rights; and
  - the improvement of governance, institutions and policies through social dialogue.
6. The workshop would provide the ILO and its tripartite constituents with the opportunity to consider how they could contribute to UN-wide action on food security, for example, through the involvement of ministries of labour and social affairs, employers' organizations and workers' organizations in the national-level consultation processes and in the Global Partnership. Hopefully, as a result of the workshop, the ILO, its tripartite constituents and the UN system as a whole would be better able to respond to the food security crisis in a coherent and coordinated way, in order to "deliver as one" in countries where the food crisis continued to pose a daily challenge for millions.

## **The work of the UN High-Level Task Force, its Comprehensive Framework for Action and the path ahead**

7. Ms Marianne Müller, Senior Policy Adviser to the UN System Coordination (Pandemic Influenza and Food Security Crisis), provided an overview of the work of the HLTF, the CFA and the Path Ahead. She described the context of the food crisis, its impact on the urban and rural poor and the need to muster a global and coordinated response. The HLTF was a time-limited entity set up by the UN Chief Executive Board to provide support to national authorities to: (a) meet immediate food needs of vulnerable populations; and (b) build longer term resilience by addressing the underlying factors driving the food crisis. This twin-track approach was outlined in the CFA, which would guide the work of the HLTF members. Key aspects of the programme of work included: supporting the realization of CFA outcomes at country level; advocating for short- and long-term funding; inspiring the broad engagement of civil society organizations and private entities; and ensuring accountability through monitoring and reporting. Among the current challenges were the development of a mechanism for coordinated financial assistance and the establishment of a global partnership for food security. Despite the likely magnitude of the food security crisis in many countries, there was strong concern that the economic crisis would adversely affect public and private investment in agriculture, the provision of social protection and progress towards a fair trading system. Ms Muller concluded by appealing for the involvement and collaboration of the ILO's tripartite constituents. Although employment was not among the objectives specified in the CFA, it could provide part of the solution.
8. Ms Sue Longley, a Worker member from the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), thanked the ILO for arranging the tripartite technical workshop and the Employer and Government representatives for their support. Trade unions had not been consulted during the drafting of the CFA and, therefore, employment issues and the labour perspective were not at the heart of the agreement. The ILO Plan of Action on the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, adopted in 2008, could be included in the CFA. Workers were concerned that agricultural workers were not included in the CFA, since workers were a source of information and could be a part of the solution. Ms Longley also recommended incorporating decent work to a higher extent. Finally, she inquired about the approach for managing the global food supply, and expressed a hope that this would be an upcoming issue for discussion.

- 
9. Mr Phil O'Reilly, the Employer member from New Zealand, stated that it was highly relevant to address the food crisis now that there was an opportunity to take action for the short, medium and long term. There was great coherence between the CFA and the matters discussed at the ILO, but also a clear difference: the CFA did not address the issues through the workplace. Small-scale initiatives were stressed in the document, but the speaker recommended that large-scale measures were needed to avoid failure. The speaker concluded by urging the ILO to become part of the HLTF.
  10. The representative of the Government of Djibouti observed that the CFA contained both challenges and solutions. The document should be disseminated at the national level to reach those working in the field.
  11. The representative of the Government of Nigeria welcomed the CFA, but noted the apparent conflict with the twin-track approach. The mandate of the HLTF was time-bound, yet the CFA proposed long-term objectives. The speaker asked how funding could be stabilized. He suggested that a clearer link to employment be included in the CFA.
  12. Mr Selcuk, the Employer member from Turkey, suggested the need for further elaboration on the incentives for investment.
  13. Ms Müller thanked participants for their questions and comments, which conveyed the positive interest in moving the process forward. While it was true that the current CFA did not have an employment lens, nor a "right to food" lens, the document should be seen as a proposal. The urgency of the food crisis, especially as presented by the media, had led the CFA to be seen from an aid angle, whereas the situation had evolved and longer term initiatives were needed. Special efforts would be made to disseminate the CFA at the national level. Financial issues were as yet unsolved, but were under discussion. The speaker concluded by encouraging the ILO's tripartite constituents to join the process. She urged the ILO to request membership in the HLTF.

## **Recent ILO work of relevance to the UN High-Level Task Force**

14. Dr Rizwanul Islam, ILO Special Adviser on Growth, Employment and Poverty Reduction, recalled the unprecedented rise in food prices in 2007–08 that had followed more than 30 years of price decline, examining recent trends in prices as well as production. Some underlying factors were structural and long term in nature, such as rising demand for food grains, increased biofuel production, declining investment in agriculture, low grain stocks, agricultural trade policies, climate change and other natural factors, and poorly developed markets. Others were short-term factors, such as the cost of inputs, poor harvests, export bans and investor behaviour in commodity markets. While global prices had declined, in many countries domestic prices remained well above the pre-crisis levels and structural factors slowed the supply response. The poor in developing countries were most harshly affected, hit both by a decline in real wages and by rising rates of unemployment and underemployment due to the wider economic crisis. Countries had pursued a range of policy responses, but surprisingly few had strengthened their employment programmes, which were potentially a powerful tool for transferring cash to the poor. At the international level, possible measures included ensuring an adequate flow of food grains, providing budgetary support to governments in need, assisting governments with compensatory financing to address balance of payment issues, and increasing support for investment in agriculture. The world of work seemed to be largely missing from the CFA, but references to employment-creation schemes, social protection systems and support for small farmers could serve as a foundation upon which to build further. The food and economic crises needed to be addressed together. The challenges presented by the crises offered opportunities to strengthen labour markets through employment programmes, make wage adjustments through social dialogue, strengthen

---

farmers' associations and cooperatives in order to better support small farmers, and broaden social protection to help those in need.

15. Mr O'Reilly found Mr Islam's presentation valuable. While supporting the action at the national and subnational levels proposed in paragraph 5.2 of the background paper, he remarked that the world had changed with the financial crisis and ensuing recession. The conclusions adopted by the 2008 International Labour Conference stated that governments should develop and enhance social protection for all which was sustainable and adapted to national circumstances. For developing countries in particular, this could be a challenge as the financial crisis affected them the most. The ILO should act urgently and creatively to advise governments in these difficult times. He urged participants to consider areas of action where much could be accomplished at relatively little expense. Two examples included the enhancement of property rights and the development of social dialogue.
16. The representative of the Government of Brazil stated that rising food prices did not have a simple explanation, but were due to a combination of factors. Biofuel production was cited as a major cause of food price increases, but not all biofuels were alike. Indeed, sugar cane-based ethanol production did not entail the food security impacts associated with the subsidized production of ethanol in developed countries that had strong distortionary effects.
17. Mr Rossmann, a Worker member from the IUF, acknowledged that various types of biofuels had different levels of influence on food prices. More efficient investment in agriculture and less dependency on the increasingly volatile inputs such as agrochemicals were needed. The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) offered important proposals for reducing dependency on volatile key inputs.
18. Mr Niang, the Employer member from Senegal, affirmed that, in the current economic climate, efforts to tackle the crisis should focus on the sustainability of enterprises and the preservation of jobs, rather than on salary increases.
19. The representative of the Government of Burkina Faso urged the Office to contribute to fund raising, follow-up and monitoring of national plans of action in order to meet the demands posed by the crisis.
20. Mr Zorreguieta, the Employer member from Argentina, congratulated Mr Islam on his presentation. The economic downturn had changed the face of the food crisis, as it exacerbated the difficulties faced by governments that lacked the funds to invest in agriculture. The issue of biofuels was complex and could not be reduced to generalities. He noted that the price of Brazilian sugar cane had not risen despite the increase in Brazilian ethanol production.
21. The representative of the Government of Mexico suggested that the ILO research presented should be enriched with data on Latin America. Everything possible should be done to preserve employment and purchasing power without changing the existing labour law.
22. Mr Dennis Sinyolo, the Worker member from Education International, suggested that further research was needed on the impact of the food price crisis on workers, for example, in terms of wages. Also, further information and innovative responses were needed to meet the specific concerns of people living with HIV/AIDS, women and children. The speaker highlighted the importance of education, training and technical assistance in response to the food crisis, which went far beyond the question of food prices alone.
23. The representative of the Government of Mozambique observed that an in-depth analysis was needed of the situation in Africa and the means to improve food security at a time when financial aid was under threat. Donors should be encouraged to increase their funding to the least developed countries (LDCs), and particularly to promote agricultural development.

- 
24. Mr Islam thanked participants for their comments, which would contribute to improving the paper. He regretted the lack of available data from certain regions, which had made in-depth coverage difficult. Education and training had perhaps not been sufficiently covered, again due to a lack of data, but were treated more fully in *Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development*, a report to the 2008 International Labour Conference, which participants were encouraged to read.
25. Ms Ann Herbert, ILO Agriculture Specialist, noted that implementation of the 2008 conclusions on rural employment would largely address the underlying causes of the food security crisis. Employment issues underpinned the food security of both urban and rural workers. The conclusions contained detailed policy advice with regard to the promotion of decent and productive employment, the extension of rights, social protection and social inclusion, and the promotion of social dialogue and better governance. The rural economy needed an enabling policy environment, adequate institutions, decent work, and well-targeted public and private investment. Social protection schemes should be linked with efforts to provide basic education and health services to strengthen capabilities and enhance employability. Governments, employers and workers had shared responsibilities, such as promoting social dialogue, partnerships and access to education and training, but also specific roles. Governments should ensure good governance, include rural employment issues in national development policies, ensure rights and services in rural areas and strengthen evidenced-based policy-making. Employers' and workers' organizations should extend their representation in rural areas. The tripartite constituents needed to be active at the national level – both to influence national policies and to enable the ILO to coordinate efforts with other intergovernmental agencies at both the international and country levels in order to deliver as one.

## Key areas of concern to ILO constituents

26. Ms Helle Damgaard Nielsen, the Worker member from the ITUC, said that the ITUC welcomed the renewed efforts to tackle the global food crisis, particularly in light of the great hardships suffered by the working poor in many countries. The speaker briefly presented some of the key findings of the ITUC's upcoming report *A recipe for hunger: How the world is failing on food*, which included an analysis of the root causes of the crisis. The ITUC recommended that the policies of the international financial institutions be realigned to focus on greater agricultural self-sufficiency, food buffer stocks and a regulated global market. Food production should be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Biofuel policies should be revised to ensure environmental sustainability, food security and decent livelihoods and safe working conditions for waged workers in the sector. Additional investment was needed in agriculture in Africa as well as technical assistance to assist net food-importing countries. There was a need for social protection schemes, cash transfers and pension and health benefits for rural waged workers and the urban poor. Finally, governance of global markets, including agricultural commodity markets, should be more inclusive, just and democratic. The world food system should receive priority attention from governments, employers, workers and international organizations, and the ILO had a key role to play in the process.
27. Ms Longley focused her remarks on agricultural workers in rural areas and how the global food price crisis had affected them. Agriculture was a major employer in developing countries, but in the CFA there was confusion with regard to the make-up of the agriculture workforce, which included smallholders and landless farmers, who primarily needed access to land, but also waged agricultural workers. Beyond the issue of definition, some of the key concerns with regard to the CFA included: (a) the lack of decent work in agriculture and, notably, the lack of freedom of association and collective bargaining; (b) vulnerability due to low wages and poor working conditions; (c) gender issues, due to the role of women in world food

---

production and in ensuring the nutritional needs of their households; (d) child labour, both in family and commercial farms; (e) the employment implications of the biofuels industry, which required further research. The IUF supported a moratorium on further expansion of biofuel production until data verifying the employment impact of the industry were available; and (f) health and safety concerns. The speaker expressed the hope that ILO's engagement with the HLTF would lead to more accurate information with regard to those points, more research on the employment implications of biofuel production, recognition of the importance of employment creation in rural areas; ensuring the availability of potable water as part of global food security; improved health and safety in the agricultural sector, and policies to strengthen the growth potential of the sector, including through training. The ILO needed to allocate resources to work on these recommendations.

- 28.** Mr O'Reilly noted that among the many causes of the food crisis was the lack of investment in agriculture prior to the crisis itself. The global economic recession and rising unemployment were most severely affecting the poorest segments of society. Governments were facing enormous constraints in their ability to cushion their citizens from the effects of the crisis due to limited fiscal resources and weak institutional capacities. The financial crisis would lead to increased poverty, malnutrition and migration. Among the highly vulnerable groups were women, migrants and youth. The speaker considered the following points essential as the ILO and its constituents addressed the underlying problems of the food crisis: (a) protectionist impulses should be resisted; (b) sustainable investment in agriculture, a steady flow of credit, secure access to global markets and a sustainable and productivity-driven approach to land use were needed to meet the growing demand for food; (c) clear property rights were needed to make possible sustained investment; (d) non-farm employment opportunities should be revitalized; (e) sustainable development policies should encourage investment in enterprise development as a specific policy goal; (f) sound macroeconomic management in respect of monetary and fiscal policies was needed; (g) rural infrastructure should be improved to reduce the time and cost of transporting goods to markets. The speaker noted the employment opportunities offered by labour-intensive infrastructure development: (h) social security measures needed to take into account the current economic situation; and (i) the structural need of the economy for migrant workers continued to exist. The speaker urged the ILO and its constituents to think practically, to focus on employment, to examine social protection in the context of the current economic situation, and to mobilize the political will to act swiftly.
- 29.** Mr Rossmann observed that both public and private investment in agriculture had fallen dramatically, as a result of the policies pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions. There was a need to reflect on how to stimulate investment levels and orient outcomes to benefit the poor. On the issue of productivity, careful analysis was needed of the failed model of monoculture production and its associated costs. Less carbon-intensive mechanisms and cheaper ways of increasing productivity should be sought as well. On the issue of property rights, the speaker noted that some poor countries had been giving away land to multinationals to produce for export. The HLTF should be cognizant of the problem and assess the impact in terms of sustainability issues, the food crisis and employment.
- 30.** The representative of the Government of Nigeria shared a number of the Workers' concerns. Some consensus should be developed to tackle speculative trading in commodities that discouraged longer term productive investment in agriculture. Land reform, land use issues and gender issues all needed to be dealt with in a systematic manner. Governments needed to provide fiscal incentives to encourage greater investment in the agriculture sector and introduce measures to manage buffer stocks efficiently. The speaker concluded by noting that developing countries produced food that they did not eat and imported what they ate. This created balance of payments problems. Indeed, there was a shortage of cash to meet all of their food import needs. It was time for people to learn to eat what they grew.
- 31.** Ms Monisha Primlani, the Employer member from the United States, stated that food safety issues should not be neglected in any food security discussion, since the challenge was to

---

ensure that people had access to safe and affordable food amid the crisis. She stressed the need for technical assistance on food safety, and noted that employers could work together to maximize food safety for consumers.

32. The representative of the Government of Brazil described how the ethanol industry helped her country face up to the challenge of employment generation and promoted decent work. The ethanol industry in Brazil provided 1 million direct jobs and 6 million indirect jobs. Working conditions were on average better than those in other industries and the average worker employed in the sector earned 50 per cent more than those employed in other sectors. The Government of Brazil was working to ensure that labour laws were fully complied with in the sector.
33. Mr Krzysztof Hagemeyer, ILO social security specialist, stressed the continued need to invest in social protection in light of the crisis. It was no accident that stimulus packages tended to expand social protection since the purpose was to protect people from the impact of the crisis. Cash transfers also helped to restore domestic demand. Investing in social protection was a way to reduce poverty at a time when both domestic and foreign demand was adversely affected by the global recession.
34. Mr O'Reilly responded that no one denied the fundamental importance of social protection. If well designed and implemented, social protection contributed to sustainable economic growth. However, with a global unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent, governments' capacity to meet growing demand for social protection would be strained. This was a challenge facing all countries. Different governments would, of course, respond to the challenge differently. Creative solutions could be found if governments worked together with the social partners to extend social protection to all in need, in light of the new economic reality.

## **Potential contributions of ILO constituents to the UN-wide response to the food crisis**

35. A draft room note, which summarized key points resulting from the day's deliberations, was presented to workshop participants. Its purpose was to provide a framework for the interaction of the ILO constituents with representatives of the HLTF the following day.
36. Ms Maria Elena Chavez, the representative of the International Cooperative Alliance, noted that the ILO had a specific and unique role with regard to the promotion and development of cooperatives. She urged inclusion of a point regarding consultation with networks of cooperatives, which could be of benefit to the work of the HLTF and to other UN development agencies.
37. Mr O'Reilly, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, expressed support for the room note as a record of the discussion, but not as draft conclusions, which would have called for much more negotiation. The room note was valuable in that it allowed participants to focus on collective concerns and to share a common framework for the following day's discussions. It was not intended to address specific issues, nor to go into depth on the points included.
38. Ms Longley, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, agreed. The room note complemented the conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2008. Its purpose was to make a link with the HLTF and to engage the ILO in the inter-agency process.
39. The representative of the Government of Nigeria suggested changing the phrase "farming practices" to "agricultural practices". He expressed support for ILO membership in the HLTF and underscored the importance of policy-level action.

- 
40. The representative of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela noted that paragraph 4 of the draft room note referred to networks of employers' and workers' organizations at international and national levels. The speaker affirmed that policy development and delivery at the national level should be coordinated by governments in order to guarantee delivery and results, and suggested that the wording of the room note be modified.
  41. The representative of the Government of Mozambique supported the proposal, and urged the ILO to participate in policy development.
  42. Ms Müller reassured the representative of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that the HLTF would never act as a substitute for national authorities. Its role was to support their efforts and initiatives.
  43. A working party composed of representatives of the Governments of Brazil, Mozambique, Nigeria and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as well as members of the Employers' and Workers' groups was set up to find appropriate wording for the room note. The resulting text is produced below.

### **Room note for food crisis meeting**

Drawing on the unanimously adopted conclusions of the 2008 ILC Committee on Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction and the presentations of participating UN agencies (and ILO constituents), the technical workshop recommends the following:

- (1) Sustainable agricultural practices, the protection of the biosphere, improving productivity, increasing the production of staple food crops to meet rising demand, the growth of sustainable enterprises, and decent work are essential and interdependent components of achieving global food security. The ILO has a range of expertise in the world of work in areas such as employment creation, occupational safety and health, entrepreneurship, child labour and gender issues which will clearly contribute to improved food security. The ILO should identify areas where its unique mandate and specific expertise can strengthen existing UN efforts in this area. In order to ensure the most balanced contribution is achieved the ILO should duly consult with its tripartite constituents in designing its activities. It should also take due note of the impacts of the global economic crisis and its aftermath on food security.
- (2) The meeting recommended that the Governing Body request the Director General to formalize interaction between the ILO and the HLTF. The ILO should make inputs based on its particular expertise. These could include but not be limited to inputs to CFA outcomes on effective social protection (Objective 2.1); strengthening global information and monitoring systems (Objective 3.1); and developing an international biofuels consensus (Objective 2.4). On biofuels the ILO should contribute on enterprise and employment implications of biofuel production.
- (3) The meeting recommended interagency cooperation to gather and review comprehensive statistical data on the rural workforce, rural labour markets and rural enterprises to assist in shaping national and international policies for food security. In line with its mandate, the ILO should carry out a study on the impact of the food crisis on employment, livelihoods and fundamental principles and rights at work.
- (4) The HLTF and national authorities working on food security are encouraged to make use of the networks of employers' and workers' organizations at international and national levels in policy development and in ensuring delivery of policy outcomes. National authorities are encouraged to involve employers' and workers' organizations, supported

---

by the ILO field structure, in the development and delivery of national plans to ensure food security.

- (5) The ILO should contribute to the work of the Global Partnership on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition particularly in the areas of employment, fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and the elimination of child labour in agriculture.

## **6 March 2009 – Inter-agency meeting with ILO constituents**

44. Mr Dragnich welcomed the representatives of member agencies of the HLTF, who joined the tripartite technical workshop on the second day. He referred to the room note adopted the previous day, which recommended ILO interaction with the HLTF, while noting that at operational levels, cooperation and collaboration were already going on. A working group on food security issues – within the wider United Nations Development Group – had called on the ILO along with the WFP, FAO and IFAD, to participate in discussions on mainstreaming food security and the alleviation of hunger in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidelines. Also, the current UNDAF guidelines (January 2009) included the CEB Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work, developed by the ILO as a means to review the different programming areas of the United Nations system through the lens of social justice and decent work for all.

## **The Decent Work Agenda and the food systems crisis**

45. Mr José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ILO Executive Director, Employment Sector, welcomed colleagues from the multilateral system to the workshop. The previous day's discussions had led to two observations: first, ILO's tripartite constituents viewed the food crisis as directly linked to employment and labour market issues. Hence, they must be engaged. Second, an important focus should be placed on the policies and institutions required to build resilience. The ILO's mandate and Decent Work Agenda complemented and supported the CFA. Productive employment, social protection, rights and social dialogue contributed to longer term resilience. In terms of employment, the ILO promoted productivity improvements, infrastructure development, such as road networks that improved market access, the diversification of economic activities and skills development. Employment-intensive construction methods, employment guarantee schemes, youth employment initiatives and entrepreneurship training for women were among the approaches pursued. In terms of social protection, ILO expertise in the design and governance of social security policies and programmes, including for low-income countries, and policies to mitigate social exclusion and discrimination could be particularly important. International labour standards offered guidance for national legislation to improve the protection of rural workers in terms of freedom of association, forced labour, child labour, discrimination, wages, working time, occupational safety and health and social security. Finally, social dialogue promoted consensus building and democratic involvement among the stakeholders in the world of work. Social dialogue structures and processes could give voice to popular concerns and strengthen the responsiveness and accountability of government. ILO constituents could contribute substantively to the Global Partnership and to the implementation of actions on the ground. Representative organizations of employers and workers, operating at both national and sectoral levels were key stakeholders to include in country-level consultations.
46. Dr David Nabarro, the Coordinator of the HLTF, affirmed that food systems were not working to meet the needs of the poor. Despite the abundance of food, more than 1 billion people were undernourished and the situation was expected to worsen with the economic downturn. The

---

CFA provided a framework for immediate assistance and for longer term efforts to build resilience. It was a living document – a compilation of the issues on which the various agencies could make contributions – but it contained significant policy inconsistencies that would need to be worked through at the international, national and community levels. The ILO’s contribution to the multi-agency effort could be significant, in terms of both the labour and employment issues that would be highlighted and the social dialogue processes that could strengthen the Global Partnership. Progress was needed in: (a) engaging institutions and organizations at country level to ensure better livelihoods for agricultural producers; (b) increasing international development assistance and improving the climate for public and private investment in agriculture; (c) garnering financial support for programmes that constituted “good practice” in terms of linking issues related to food security; (d) placing food security issues at a higher political level; and (e) improving accountability in terms of human-oriented indicators. There seemed to be a growing desire for “the right to food” to be part of the implicit contract that linked people and their governments. The speaker concluded by urging the ILO to contribute its perspectives, analyses and actions to the work of the HLTF and the Global Partnership, to help make food security a sustainable reality.

## **The human rights-based approach to addressing the crisis of the food system**

47. Dr Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, spoke about the human rights-based approach to addressing the crisis of the food system and described its added value and the need for greater visibility. Hunger was not the result of scarcity, but rather of a lack of purchasing power of the poor. To give effect to the right to food, targeting, accountability and solidarity were needed. In terms of accountability, the right to food should be recognized under the law and States should develop strategies, benchmarks and indicators to achieve food security in practice. The speaker highlighted the links between the food crisis, the current economic crisis and the labour market and pointed to four important “blind spots” in the discourse on the food crisis. First, declarations on the food crisis made no reference to the rights of workers, such as safety and health at the workplace or the guarantee of a living wage. Second, no reference was made to the political economy of the food systems, particularly to the role of commodity buyers, processors and retailers, whose actions strongly affected food prices. Third, the impacts of trade liberalization were inadequately addressed. The speaker feared that trade liberalization in agricultural commodities, unless adequate safeguards are provided and unless governments take affirmative action in favour of smallholders, would reinforce inequalities between the export sector and producers only serving the domestic market, and thus increase the dualization of the farming sector. In addition, the current movement towards trade liberalization, as illustrated by the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations, did not create the right framework of incentives since it ignored elements necessary for sustainability, notably the environment, the depletion of soils and the health of workers. Fourth and finally, no reference was made to the need to support countries facing shocks, whether from natural causes such as bad harvests or from sudden shifts in prices. A global reinsurance mechanism should be created to insure countries against all types of risks. Some efforts had been made to limit price volatility and they were encouraging. Food was not a commodity like any other and could not be left to market forces.
48. Mr Aderemi Adegboyega, an Employer member from Nigeria, asked how the principles of accountability and human rights, including the right to food, could be implemented if, at the national level, authorities did not fulfil their responsibilities.
49. Dr De Schutter responded that progress has been made in many countries in terms of recognizing the right to food. At least a dozen had recognized this right in their Constitutions. Hunger was not the result of lack of food, but rather the consequence of failed policy. It made sense to recognize the right to food as a human right, since by protecting the legal entitlements

---

of the poor, we improve their resilience in the face of sudden shocks against which, all too often, they are not sufficiently protected.

- 50.** Mr Harsha Singh, Deputy Director-General of the WTO, pointed to the distinction between the need for trade negotiations, the aim of which was to increase economic growth, and the concurrent need to address issues of education, social protection and food security. Those objectives could be pursued in parallel. There was no need to slow down the Doha negotiations in order to include considerations related to the right to food. The Doha Round would not only increase income earning opportunities for developing countries; it was the only way to address several key factors at the international level which adversely affect food security. These included distortions through agriculture subsidies by developed countries and various tariffs which limited market access. A successful Doha Round would create greater incentives for farmers in less developed countries to grow crops. The lower subsidies on cotton were of special interest for several African LDCs, and the duty-free, quota-free market access for 97 per cent of all tariff lines for LDC exports implied substantial market opportunities for them. Addressing these aspects was important from the point of view of fairness, income and growth opportunities, and food security concerns. Dr De Schutter had given the example of appropriate policies being followed by a number of countries. These were all WTO members. This showed that the WTO regime did not constrain these initiatives.
- 51.** Mr Manzoor Ahmad, Director of the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva, agreed that new trade rules were needed, since the current rules favoured those most able to subsidize their agricultural products. The Doha Round was the best way forward to reduce such distortions.
- 52.** The representative of the Government of Brazil concurred, noting the long-standing commitment of his country to the right to food. A recent meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council had agreed that subsidies posed a problem for human rights.
- 53.** Mr Richard Newfarmer, World Bank special representative to the UN and WTO, pointed out the highest barriers to trade were largely directed against the poor, against agriculture and against labour-intensive products. Free trade did not adversely affect the poor or the goal of guaranteeing access to food. A number of trade-distorting subsidies, such as those affecting agriculture, fishing and biofuels, would be disciplined by the Doha Round.
- 54.** Mr O'Reilly expressed his astonishment at the absence of any mention by Dr De Schutter of the role of the private sector in ensuring food security and asked for clarification.
- 55.** Dr De Schutter agreed that trade subsidies had to be tackled and that market access was vital. However, removing market distortions would not solve all the issues associated with food security. The Doha Round should aim to make trade socially and environmentally sustainable. The speaker warned against the potential negative consequences of the international division of labour and encouraged a progressive opening of the market, as had been done in Brazil and India. The private sector would clearly provide part of the solution. That was self-evident.
- 56.** Dr Nabarro added that private sector producers and cooperatives played a key role in advancing food security and sustainability. The mandate of the HLTF had been defined by the Chief Executives Board, the governance structure of the of UN system, which would assess the relevance of the current framework, the progress that had been made regarding the programme of work and the effectiveness of the mandate.

---

## Contributions of the ILO constituents to the UN-wide response to the food crisis

57. Mr O'Reilly observed that the ILO was doing a great deal of work related to food security, though not labelled as such. He appreciated the linkages between food and labour issues, notably in terms of nutrition and productivity, and the need for investment in agriculture. While the CFA's focus on smallholders was necessary, it was not sufficient. Investment was needed to upgrade the totality of the food system, including infrastructure. Public-private partnership and enhanced accountability were important. Turning to Dr De Schutter's remarks, the speaker responded that labour rights should not be discussed in isolation, but rather within the balanced context of decent work, of which employment formed a pillar. While there was nothing wrong with the idea that multinationals needed to focus on workers' rights, the discussion should also include a recognition of the contributions that multinationals and their international supply chains could make to food security. The speaker strongly objected to statist solutions, including the regulation of food prices, noting that markets mattered. Productivity growth was the only path to food security. The challenges of the food sector would be met by productive sustainable enterprises. Both the CFA and the 2008 conclusions on rural employment pointed to the need for social protection, investment in rural infrastructure, and a consensus on biofuels and stressed the desirability of free trade. There was, however, a stark difference between the two documents. The CFA lacked the perspective of the world of work. It did not engage the actors in the private sector – employers and workers – who could deliver food security if governments provided an enabling environment. Importantly, it overlooked the benefits of social dialogue. Referring to paragraph 4 of the room note, the speaker urged the HLTF members to use the networks of employers' and workers' organizations in the consultation processes foreseen at the national and local levels. He urged ILO to join the HLTF and to use the 2008 conclusions to implement and improve the CFA.
58. Ms Longley observed that achieving decent work in agriculture was fundamental to advancing the fight against hunger. Whether farm-gate prices rose or fell, many agricultural workers continued to live in dire poverty and were among the most food insecure. The CFA spoke of various stakeholders, but did not mention agricultural workers. A major step toward eradicating malnutrition would be to pay a living wage to agricultural workers. The way out of poverty wages was through collective bargaining. The speaker urged the CFA to take up the application of ILO standards on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The inter-agency contribution to reducing hunger and malnutrition should be anchored in a human rights framework, whether in terms of developing a consensus on biofuels, regulating commodity markets, or encouraging investment in agriculture. The aim should be to raise living standards, enhance access to affordable, nutritious food, promote sustainability and advance the rights of workers. The Workers' group urged the HLTF to ensure that food rights were at the heart of inter-agency policy and subject to continuous monitoring. Inter-agency action should address the food security and employment needs of rural workers. The plan of action developed at the International Labour Conference in 2008 should shape the ILO's contribution to the CFA along with ILO expertise on HIV/AIDS and the elimination of child labour in agriculture. Agencies should cooperate in the gathering and review of comprehensive statistical data on the rural workforce, rural labour markets and rural enterprises to support formulation of food security policies. The HLTF should make use of the networks of employers' and workers' organizations at international and national levels in the development and delivery national policies and plans. The strategic role of women in food systems must be recognized in policy responses. The ILO's interaction with the HLTF should be formalized, and the ILO should contribute to the Global Partnership in the areas of employment, fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and the elimination of child labour in agriculture. The speaker concluded by fully endorsing the room note.

- 
- 59.** The representative of the Government of Nigeria stated that efforts to address the food crisis were complicated by the effects of the financial crisis and the growing scarcity of resources. Governments should target their stimulus packages to critical areas. A recent review of Nigeria's land use policy with regard to agricultural development had suggested that government should encourage microfinance investments in rural farming. Large-scale investments were also needed. The speaker shared the Workers' concerns over the absence of collective bargaining rights. Securing basic rights should be paramount. In Africa, the current crisis had reduced workers' purchasing power by 40 per cent. Agricultural workers were unable to ensure their own food security due to low wages. Employers and workers in the agriculture sector needed to reach agreements on raising both productivity and wages.
- 60.** Ms Primlani said that, in order to improve global access to safe and affordable food, stakeholders would have to form responsible policies. The food and beverage industry would be willing to provide its support in alleviating the food crisis. It was unmatched in its operational proficiencies with regard to food safety, the functioning of the supply chain and the factors that influence global markets. The speaker expressed concern with the United States policies on biofuels, which had created a secondary demand for grains and distorted the market. There should be a pause on biofuel production until the unintended consequences, the environmental impact and the economics behind it were more fully understood or until second-generation biofuels and other renewable energy sources were more widely available. The UN should bring together its work on food security and on food safety in a constructive manner without creating market access barriers to food. The Doha Round was critical to achieving access not only to foodstuffs, seed, feed and fertilizers, but also to safety gear, environmental goods and manufacturing equipment so that countries could safely produce affordable food.
- 61.** Ms Daria Cibrario, a Worker member from the IUF, stressed the importance of food safety in light of the great social burden associated with food scarcity and food-borne diseases. She highlighted the close connection between union and labour rights, the quality of health and safety at the workplace, and the safety of the food produced. The labour dimensions were not sufficiently reflected in the CFA.
- 62.** The representative of the Government of Bangladesh considered food security to be a primary political concern involving institutions beyond the Ministry of Agriculture. International partnerships to resolve the food, fuel and financial crises should be inclusive. Developing countries should be at the table in all international conferences and meetings, such as the G20, that considered such issues, including the question of migration. The possible need for a global reinsurance fund to support major policy changes, and the provision of assistance to countries that needed to diversify their economies and enhance their trade capacity should be foreseen. Bangladesh's Food for Work programme, which focused on women, was a relevant model for improving rural infrastructure.
- 63.** Mr Sinyolo described the severe impact of the food crisis on children's education. School feeding programmes attracted many children to attend school. Hikes in food prices meant that more children were leaving school and even joining the child labour force in order to help their families pay for food. The lasting physical and psychological damage that occurred due to malnutrition would contribute to lower educational achievement. Education and training provided the basic skills necessary for productive employment. Research, innovation and technical support services were necessary to resolve the crisis. A timely assessment of the impact of the food crisis on workers' rights was needed.
- 64.** Mr Salazar noted the simultaneity of the food, fuel and financial crises and their impact on the labour market, which had led to the current jobs crisis. The G20 meetings needed to focus on the employment and social dimensions of the crisis, not simply on fiscal and financial aspects.

- 
65. Dr Nabarro noted that many of the representatives of HLTF member agencies had worked intensively on such linkages and would describe the contributions of their agencies. Advocacy on behalf of the poor must remain at the centre of all major international meetings, such as the G20, the G8 and the UN General Assembly. In order to achieve the resilience needed to come out of the crisis, a truly global partnership among nations must be developed. The speaker concluded by noting the impact of food insecurity on those living with HIV/AIDS.

## **Achieving global policy coherence and providing opportunities for country-level action: The way forward**

66. Mr Harsha Singh, Deputy Director-General, WTO, affirmed that international trade was a vital part of the policy package foreseen in the CFA. International trade increased the availability of cheaper food, allowed more efficient production, led to greater income earning market opportunities and improved economic efficiency. The WTO system contributed to greater stability and predictability for conducting economic activity, and thus encouraged countries to withstand the protectionist pressures. Indeed, the generally desired thrust for better trade policies aimed to reduce distorting subsidies and other barriers to trade so as to provide better income earning opportunities. This approach needed to be combined with domestic policies to increase agriculture productivity, which were crucial to dealing with food security concerns over time. The key feature of the WTO Agreement was that it specifically recognized various domestic policy objectives, including the need to address import surges and balance of payment concerns, provided the flexibility to address them in a disciplined and transparent manner, and aimed to prevent ad hoc measures which could lead to trade distortions. WTO disciplines did not prevent the adoption of policies to promote pro-poor agricultural growth, reduce market volatility, or expand social protection and child nutrition. Countries such as Brazil, Guatemala, India and Indonesia, all Members of the WTO, were following their social policies within the framework of the flexibilities provided. The basic structure of the WTO Agreement as maintained in the Doha Round negotiations aimed at reducing the international market distortions and providing developing countries with flexibilities for using a simpler safeguard mechanism and other flexibilities for reasons of food security, farmers' livelihoods and rural development. Thus, the Doha negotiations aimed at reducing the inequities due to different development levels. It was crucial that aid commitments be honoured in the present situation. The WTO and Doha negotiations provided a good basis for contributing to achieving the objectives of the CFA.
67. Mr Manzoor Ahmad, Director of the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva, noted that, despite the recent decline, international prices of most food commodities remained nevertheless 16 per cent higher than at the same period in 2007 and 25 per cent higher than in 2006. High prices had generally not filtered down to farmers in developing countries. Gains had occurred in the developed world where food production increased by 9.7 per cent against less than 1 per cent in developing countries. The current crisis and declining prices would reduce long-term investment. Official assistance to agriculture had declined for decades. For these reasons, supply was expected to decline and prices to rise in the coming year. Competition and protectionism would lead to higher rates of casual employment, threatening the livelihoods of farmers and self-employed agricultural producers. The speaker urged the ILO to provide information on the impact of the crisis on employment in sectors such as agriculture and forestry and of fluctuating food prices on the livelihood security of workers and the self-employed, as well as on child labour, including a gender analysis. Female-headed households were likely to be the most severely affected. The FAO data did not support the view that escalating demand for food grains in emerging market economies was a key cause of sudden price increases. China's and India's growing demand for cereals had been progressively met by domestic sources since the 1980s. FAO had anticipated the onset of the global crisis in December 2007 and had taken initiatives to provide poor farmers with quality inputs. Greater

---

coherence was needed in the governance of world food security. Better coordination would enable the agriculture sector to overcome supply-side constraints. Social protection should target the most needy. More investment in agriculture was needed to build infrastructure and increase productivity in developing countries. The speaker welcomed the ILO to join in the global effort to achieve food security.

- 68.** Mr Charles Vincent, Director of the WFP Geneva Office, noted that, while prices on the international markets had come down, high food prices persisted in many poor countries due to several factors including market distortions. These high food prices on local markets continued to affect the poorest consumers; hence the need to ensure adequate social safety nets, including school meals, nutrition programmes and targeted employment programmes. He recalled that the cost of child under-nutrition was about US\$20–30 billion per annum and when multiplied over a lifetime, this amounted to between US\$500 billion and US\$1 trillion in lost productivity. For some countries, child malnutrition amounted to a 2–3 per cent loss in annual GDP. This was a critical moment in history as three crises converged: food, fuel and finance. With the growing impact of climate change, the major question was whether enough food could be produced to meet the needs of the hungry. The WFP was watching key factors to determine how the financial crisis was affecting the poor: (1) remittances, which account for 20–25 per cent of the GDP of many developing countries; the availability of employment in both developed and developing countries had a direct impact on food security in developing countries and particularly in the poorest households; (2) export dependence: as exports slowed, so did the incomes in poor countries; (3) growing poverty rates; (4) external investment and access to credit; and (5) access to adequate supplies. The WFP worked to counter unemployment and promote agricultural production in developing countries by purchasing needed foodstuffs from small farmers' associations and cooperatives locally and regionally. Given the large quantities involved, WFP could not rely solely on smallholders, but the programme worked to ensure that small farmers received better quality seeds and fertilizers in order to boost production. In conclusion, the speaker cited the budding collaboration between the WFP and the ILO in supporting school feeding programmes to get youngsters out of the workplace and into school. He suggested future collaboration in the effort to enable workers living with HIV/AIDS to remain active.
- 69.** Mr Stephen Browne, Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Programmes), ITC, affirmed that the recent food price had more to do with short-term market distortions and disruptions than to longer term trends. All the major food crises of the past 40 years had been man-made. While there was clearly an overall long-term increase in global demand for food, global food production had always kept pace with demand, as more land was cultivated more intensively and productively. Future challenges related mainly to environmental factors – such as water resources, climate change and land fertility. Future price trends for the three main food grains were reassuring. Experience had shown that while food crises were temporary, they were exacerbated by policy decisions and actions which could have been avoided as well as lack of adequate market facilitation. The ITC supported most of the actions proposed in the ILO paper, especially increasing investment in agriculture and providing farmers with more access to credit. With regard to the international economy, if governments wished to take precautionary measures to secure food supplies and stocks for domestic use for release in domestic markets, such measures must be taken in a predictable and transparent fashion. In crisis situations, a rule-based approach was more likely to lead to orderly outcomes and reduce excessive volatility. Ad hoc precautionary measures should be clearly announced by national governments prior to their implementation and they should be in place for a brief fixed period only. Surveillance of international markets should include measures to lessen the incentives for speculative holdings of futures contracts. The speaker concluded by urging that consensus be found on two key issues. First, agricultural protectionism in developed countries was the single most egregious global market distortion and must be completely phased out. Second, a non-ideological debate, based on scientific facts, was needed in order to come to a common understanding with regard to genetically modified crops, which potentially offered the possibility of a major new green revolution.

- 
70. Mr Harmon Thomas, representative of UNCTAD, noted that food security implied both the availability of food and the means to buy it. Many countries had the agricultural conditions to produce sufficient food to feed themselves. It was a sign of policy failure when agriculture-based economies were importing food to meet their basic needs. Efforts were needed at the national level to create an enabling environment for economic growth in general and the agriculture sector in particular. This included government support for infrastructure and extension services and for improving marketing and distribution systems and access to credit to improve the livelihoods of producers. A level playing field was needed in a globalized economy with integrated markets. There was a need to roll back trade distorting measures and to provide special safeguard mechanisms to hold back import surges. Countries' capacity to export to international markets also needed strengthening.
71. Mr Shanta Mukarjee, representative of the UNDP, said that rising food prices had exposed fundamental flaws in the systems that guaranteed access to food and nutrition. Steps needed to be taken to address them. The world economy was heading into a period of falling incomes, which would lead to worse diets and nutrition, particularly for the poor. Malnutrition had long-term irreversible impacts on health and education. Increased price volatility made it harder for producers to make needed investments since returns were uncertain. The speaker noted that the ILO had led the way in inter-agency discussions on developing policy coherence within the UN system. This approach needed to be replicated in the field at the national level within the UN Development Group. The ILO's tripartite constituents could contribute to the development of broad-based national development strategies that would address food security issues. The UNDP stood ready to help in meeting this growing threat of our times.
72. Mr Zorreguieta noted that the food crisis had precipitated into a financial crisis. He expressed concern regarding the scarcity of financial resources for productive investments and the uncertainty as to how long the crisis would last. Higher agricultural productivity and improved technologies, for example genetics, were needed to address the food crisis. Argentina's agricultural productivity had increased thanks to the advances made in irrigation systems, the use of genetically modified crops and land use. The poor needed better access to goods and markets. Therefore changes in infrastructure and methods of delivery were needed. The speaker expressed concern that the success of the Doha Round was threatened by the protectionist mood that it had brought to the industrial and agricultural sectors. Reducing agriculture's reliance on oil would be difficult, but it was important to move towards environmentally friendly means of production. Biofuels should not adversely affect the production of food crops. Brazilian sugar cane production was a case in point. Brazilian ethanol production had had no effect on international sugar prices.
73. Mr Rossmann thanked the UNDP representative for reminding participants of the scars of malnutrition caused by the financial crisis. Production controls were not necessarily the best tools to combat hyperinflation. Governments should be held responsible for ensuring people's access to food and nutrition. He noted that export controls might be politically justifiable but, if such measures were taken by many, there would be adverse effects. He asked the agencies present to reflect on how to ensure continuous access to meet citizens' nutritional needs, and how to do so without undermining national food production systems. Concerning genetically modified crops, the speaker cited the 2008 IAASTD study which pointed to ways to raise productivity while enhancing rural employment and promoting sustainable development. He asked why the message had been so consistently ignored.
74. Mr Kush Kumar Joshi, the Employer member from Nepal, linked the impact of the increase in food prices with other food security issues as well as the energy crisis. Infrastructure needed to be developed to improve food distribution. The UN and its agencies should work to help the agriculture sector which could, in turn, aid the energy sector, for example, by promoting the production of sugar for transformation into ethanol. The ILO should assist in supporting rural employment schemes, promoting entrepreneurship and access to finance and raising employability through skills training.

- 
- 75.** Ms Maria Elena Chavez, Deputy Director-General of the International Cooperative Alliance, affirmed the importance of having basic human needs as the main focus for discussion. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda could aid in solving the food crisis and could provide support to agencies working on food security. The cooperative movement was at its heart a self-help movement for which livelihood issues were key. Members of cooperatives were willing to lend their expertise in helping to solve the food crisis. The ILO should integrate issues from the world of work into the work of the HLTF.
- 76.** A representative of the Government of Nigeria asked whether, in light of the slow progress made during the Doha Round, the WTO had explored other approaches to opening markets, for example through regional or subregional groupings. The experience of the Nigerian Civil War had demonstrated that periods of crisis offered opportunities for innovation. Land, sea, and air blockades had acted as a catalyst for agricultural innovation, which had offered employment opportunities. The Government had encouraged graduates to join the agricultural sector and the outcome was a large increase in grain production. Countries should explore the possible employment content of the current crisis. The main issues for developing countries were microfinance to support rural employment, nutritional issues with regard to HIV/AIDS and school feeding programmes. Efforts should be made to assist small farmers in covering the high costs of energy and fertilizer so that countries could achieve food sufficiency.
- 77.** Mr Ahmad concurred that the food crisis also offered opportunity. Whereas investment in agriculture had been falling for years, now, due to the crisis, countries had begun to increase their investments in the sector. Negative aspects of food aid, such as dumping, had also decreased.
- 78.** Mr O'Reilly thanked the UN agency representatives for their interventions and commended them for their work. The level of debate and the variety of approaches adopted by the various agencies – whether focused on governmental interventions, action by the business community or trade – demonstrated the complexity of the issues and offered a learning experience for employers. The speaker called on the agencies to work with the ILO and its constituents, in developing specific time-bound, cost-effective activities to move to greater food security. The room note accurately represented the issues discussed and acted as a call to action.
- 79.** Mr Singh commented on export restraints in the context of the WTO Framework. Thin agricultural markets were easily impacted by availability and price, which affected the affordability of agricultural goods. He criticized the blanket ban on exports due to its interference in providing humanitarian aid. He observed that there were multiple, alternative ways in which to achieve the goals and objectives of the CFA. The WTO Framework should render export restraints more transparent through notification, and the provision of information regarding duration and the reason for the export barriers. Regional and bilateral trade agreements could be used if they satisfied the required specifications, but the WTO did not take initiatives in this regard; WTO members did. However, in order to reduce distorting policies, countries had to act at the WTO level, not the regional level. Substantial progress had been made in the Doha Round, despite the sea of pessimism. Protectionist pressures were limited by the WTO framework. With regard to transparency, the Director-General of the WTO had recently published a report on recent trade policy measures and economic stimulus measures to increase or decrease market access.
- 80.** Mr Brown echoed Mr Singh's comments regarding export restraints, which could reduce volatility as long as they were short term and predictable. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) were an emotional issue. Developing countries that exported GMOs might not be able to enter the markets of certain developed countries that restricted them. The most meaningful impact of the UN development system was at the country level. While complicated, when agency efforts came together, the system could be powerful.

- 
- 81.** Mr Vincent commented on export controls with regard to food in transit. Food aid was no longer what it had been in the 1970s when countries shipped their surpluses to developing countries. Since then, the negative aspects had been reduced. Food aid represented a small portion of global cereal production, but it could mean life or death for many. Food aid was needed and appreciated and could act as a social safety net in the short run, but it could not replace the agricultural investment required in the long run to ensure food security. With regard to the UN system-wide collaboration on food security, the HLTF was a team effort, involving the expertise and focus of each member.
- 82.** Mr Gordon Alexander, a representative from UNICEF, stated that the food and nutrition crisis provided tremendous opportunities to scale up actions in partnership with other UN agencies. The UN and its specialized agencies should monitor the effects of the food and financial crisis and support countries as they determined the most appropriate social protection systems for their circumstances. Recalling the collaboration between the ILO and UNICEF in the 1980s, the speaker suggested that a paradigm shift might be needed, noting that a human rights approach offered insights on how to address the current crisis. A family-centric approach to resolving the issues related to food security should be considered.
- 83.** Dr Nabarro thanked the ILO for its engagement at such a senior level and called it a turning point in the collective work on food security. He thanked the ILO constituents for illustrating and elucidating the ILO's perspective. He would be working with senior colleagues to search for activities which could be initiated together to spark action. He thanked the colleagues from the international system for the harmony and synergy with which they worked at the country level, even while major policy issues remained.
- 84.** Ms Longley thanked the representatives of HLTF member agencies for their positive contributions to the workshop and urged them to consider not only the role of smallholders, but also the importance of waged agricultural workers in promoting food security. Decent work in agriculture would provide part of the solution to the food crisis. The ILO's expertise on HIV/AIDS, and in particular its code of practice, could contribute to the inter-agency work in that area. The speaker welcomed inter-agency partnerships to promote school feeding programmes and other social protection measures to address the food crisis, and cited the Global Partnership against child labour that linked the ILO, FAO, IFAD, CGIAR, IFAP and the IUF, as an example of efforts to be strengthened and expanded. As a result of the workshop, trade unions had a clearer idea of how the ILO could contribute to the work of the HLTF and, hopefully, member agencies recognized the potential contribution of the ILO and its constituents to the HLTF. The 2008 conclusions on rural employment provided a framework for the ILO's work. She supported the room note and commended it to the Governing Body.
- 85.** Mr O'Reilly agreed with Ms Longley's comments regarding the relevance of the conclusions on rural employment as well as support for the room note. The private sector was engaged as an equal partner in the work of the ILO. The workshop had offered the multilateral agencies present the opportunity to engage constructively, through the rubric of the ILO, with private sector employers and workers active in the real economy who would deliver on food security. The discussions had been stimulating and he thanked all participants for the freshness and vitality they had brought to the debates. He expressed the hope that, as a result of the workshop, the ILO would contribute effectively to the global efforts to achieve food security.
- 86.** Mr Salazar reviewed the key points that had emerged from the two days of discussion. There was much complementarity between the Decent Work Agenda and the CFA, particularly in terms of building longer term resilience. Implementing the conclusions on rural employment would go far in responding to food insecurity. There was concern that the ILO was not part of the HLTF and that the key actors in the world of work – employers and workers – were ignored. Several gaps in the CFA had been identified. For example, employment was absent, though it was central to food security. Agriculture was conceived of as smallholder

---

agriculture, ignoring the complexity of food production systems and the businesses and workforce that make them work. Policy frameworks to raise the productivity of smallholders were necessary, but insufficient to address the agricultural production and productivity gains needed to ensure food security. The room note agreed at the end of the first day gave a sense of the day's deliberations. The tripartite constituents felt that the ILO should formalize its interaction with the HLTF, that it could make a specific contribution in the areas of its technical expertise and that its field structure should support the involvement of employers' and workers' organizations in the development and delivery of national plans to ensure food security. The second day of the workshop had brought together ILO constituents with the multilateral agencies represented on the HLTF for vibrant and stimulating discussions. The speaker thanked Dr Nabarro, Dr De Schutter and the other key speakers for the thoughtful interventions that had provoked intense interest and debate. These had made clear how many strands needed to be taken into account in our analysis and response to food insecurity. Among these were trade issues, price fluctuations, humanitarian relief efforts, environmental concerns, HIV/AIDS, social protection schemes, the lack of agreement on GMOs, the impact of biofuels subsidies, issues of institutional capacity faced by many countries, financing mechanisms, labour rights in rural areas and in agricultural supply chains, the role of cooperatives, the impact on children of malnutrition and, importantly, the possibilities for partnership to turn crisis into opportunity. It was clear that the ILO had a specific role to play in bringing employment issues, indeed, the whole Decent Work Agenda, into the heart of inter-agency discussions, so that, together, policy coherence could be developed at the global level. But the focus of action would be on concrete achievements at the national level. Employers' and workers' organizations constituted an important network of actors throughout the real economy. They needed to be brought into country-level consultation processes, so that they could contribute their expertise and their outreach to national efforts to address food security. In conclusion, the speaker took note of the importance attached to the plan of action in the 2008 conclusions on rural employment, the full support of the social partners for the room note, and the desire that its content be conveyed to the Governing Body.