

**PREPARATORY MEETING FOR 2005 ECOSOC  
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
16-17 March 2005**

*“Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities”*

**ROUNDTABLE 1: ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND HUNGER**

**Chair: H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC**

**Lead Organizers: FAO, WFP and IFAD<sup>1</sup>**

**Moderator: Mr. Hartwig de Haen, Assistant-Director-General, FAO**

**BACKGROUND NOTE**

**Swift and coordinated action is needed to halve hunger  
and extreme poverty everywhere by 2015**

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<sup>1</sup> Other collaborators include UNDP, World Bank, ILO, UNFPA, UNU, UNIDO, UNCTAD, OHRLLS, DESA, DSPD, UNPFII and the Millennium Project.



## **Hunger and Poverty: Exploring the Critical Linkages**

- **Set targets and agree on coordinated actions in each country.** This involves profiling the poor and hungry, agreeing on priorities, roadmaps and timetables, exploiting synergies among the goals, mobilizing resources and allocating them strategically. Despite perceived shortcomings, nationally-owned Poverty Reduction Strategies are increasingly fulfilling this function and are becoming principal national tools to achieve the MDGs<sup>2</sup>. International cooperation should support such national efforts.
- **Combine transfers with long-term development programmes:** Addressing the urgency and sustainability of the poverty reduction effort requires a **twin-track approach** which combines (a) direct interventions to address the immediate needs of poor and hungry by investing in social safety nets, conditional or unconditional cash transfers, food and nutrition programmes with (b) long-term development programmes to enhance the performance of the productive sectors (especially to promote agriculture and rural development), create employment and increase the value of the assets held by the poor ( physical, human, financial). Establishing coherence between economic and social policies improves their effectiveness. The creation of decent work (more and better jobs, including adequate social protection systems) could go a long way towards hunger and poverty reduction. Reducing inequalities in income and access to assets increases the beneficial impact of economic growth on poverty reduction.
- **Give priority to actions in hotspots:** Programmes and investments need to focus on poverty and hunger “hotspots” – those areas around the world and within a country where a significant proportion of people suffer from malnutrition and high incidence of poverty. Implementation of plans of action for country groups or regions (e.g. NEPAD, the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Barbados Programme of Action for the Small Island Developing States etc.) should be supported in the context of the MDGs.
- **Intervene directly to enable the neediest:** The hunger-productivity nexus brings to the fore the necessity of direct and immediate access to food and good nutrition in order for the most vulnerable groups to take advantage of development opportunities. Innovative approaches for direct assistance have to be context-specific. Initiatives such as school meals supplied by local production should be up-scaled when good results have been obtained. Investment in health services (including access to reproductive health services and programmes to combat HIV-AIDS), sanitation and clean water programmes are essential complementary interventions.

infrastructure, research and communications, , facilitating the functioning of markets and enhancing rural institutions. Productivity-induced agricultural growth has a wider impact on rural areas through the strengthening of off-farm activities and rural employment and wages. It is urgent that the declining trend in official development assistance to agriculture and rural development be reversed.

- **Accelerate progress towards an open and fair international trading system:** In order to make the system more conducive to reduction of poverty and hunger, progress is particularly needed on issues of market access, export subsidies and trade-distorting domestic support in agriculture. In particular, low income countries need to strengthen the competitiveness of their domestic food production and compliance with sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards. They need concrete provisions for trade-related financial and technical assistance. Furthermore, in view of the continuing distortions on world markets, they need to be given more “policy space” necessary to reduce poverty and hunger by developing their rural areas and agriculture. The agreement in WTO should contain strengthened provisions for safety nets at the international level, such as the Marrakech Decision for assuring reliable and affordable import of foods.
- **Support a dynamic growth process:** The promotion of rural development in a sustainable way can stem rural-urban migration, bring employment opportunities to rural areas, reduce regional income disparities, and ultimately fight poverty at its very source. Emphasis needs to be placed on diversification towards rural non-farm activities, including value-added production, and strengthening productive capacities of micro, small and medium enterprises, a process in which women in rural areas play a major role. The dynamic transition from agricultural to industrial production and strengthening the links between these two sectors, is a major driving force of economic and social transformation.
- **Strengthen poor urban livelihoods:** Important as the rural space is for economic development and poverty reduction, it cannot escape our attention that world population is increasingly “urbanizing”. Challenges in meeting urban food security include: pro-poor employment and asset generation, combined with measures to assist the urban poor in meeting their basic needs, in particular regarding housing, nutrition and water, food safety, health and primary education.
- **Use bottom-up and participatory approaches.** Local institutions are needed managed by and accountable to local people and communities. Local capacity building and skill development are key elements to the empowerment of poor people to take charge of their lives as is the enhancement of legal and property rights and access to resources especially by vulnerable groups such as women and indigenous people. In this context, and in accord with the Millennium Declaration, efforts should be made to promote the human right to adequate food and implement the related Guidelines recently adopted by governments. MDG-based strategies should be transparent and inclusive working closely with civil society organizations, the domestic private sector, and international partners.