



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Statement by His Excellency Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC

WORLD FOOD DAY 2020 (VIRTUAL EVENT)

16 October 2020

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to join you in commemorating the World Food Day and the 75th anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

This year's Nobel Peace Prize could not have come at a better time to stress that peace is not possible without food security.

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to World Food Programme for this prestigious recognition.

Excellencies,

As we speak today, COVID-19 is causing havoc with the lives of people.

The global economic slowdown, caused by the Pandemic, is affecting all four pillars of food security - availability, access, utilization, and stability.

Agricultural and food markets are facing continuous disruptions due to labor shortages caused by lockdowns as well as by large shifts in food demand arising from income losses and the closure of schools and restaurants.

The income decline had impacted food security and put food access at risk.

The most impacted are the poor and vulnerable as they spend on average 70% of their total income on food.

Excellencies,

It is clear that even before the pandemic we were not on track on SDG2.

It is regrettable to note that today cost of healthy diet has exceeded the international poverty line of \$1.9 a day making it unaffordable for the poor.

The current trend suggests that the number of people affected by hunger would surpass 840 million by 2030.

The COVID-19 would further add between 83 and 132 million to the total number of undernourished around the world in 2020.

This would also translate into more stunted growth in children which currently affects 144 million.

Excellencies,

To overcome our challenges it is important that we address the core issues:

First, we must ensure that food supply chains are not disrupted during crisis. The most prominent example in this regard is “green lanes” created by the Chinese government to ease transport, production, and distribution of agricultural inputs and food products.

Second, we need to invest in sustainable agriculture-related infrastructure to ensure market access for remote and small-scale farmers in the developing countries.

Third, trade is an important component for availability of food and stability in its prices.

It is important that we avoid disruptive policies to keep them consistent with the rules agreed at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in the interest of the poor in developing countries.

Fourth, sustainable agriculture technologies must be made available to the developing countries on concessional and preferential terms.

The Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries and Technology Facilitation Mechanism at the UN provide opportunities for actions in this regard.

Fifth, billions of dollars of agricultural subsidies by the industrialized countries in agricultural sector have led to chronic overproduction, dumping surpluses, and distortions in global markets.

This has made it impossible for small-scale farmers in developing countries to compete in international markets and at times in domestic markets.

Agricultural reform are therefore needed to make these trade practices fair and equitable.

Excellencies,

I intend to explore how the ECOSOC's mandate and mechanisms can be used to promote such reforms.

For the past two years, the HLPF has provided a prominent occasion to launch FAO's flagship publication that provides an overview of the State of Food Security and Nutrition across the globe.

The Food System Summit next year will also be a major opening to ensure that our ambition for zero hunger by 2030 translates into actions.

Excellencies,

Promoting a robust multilateral response guided by global solidarity remains at the core of our response to the current pandemic.

On this World Food Day, I encourage you all to work together and scale up collective solutions to advance sustainable development.

Only by working together can we build back better, get back on track to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reduce vulnerabilities to future shocks and disasters.

I thank you.