

FROM THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

WORLD FOOD DAY

16 October 2009

Message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

"Achieving food security in times of crisis"

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Food and nutritional security are the foundations of a decent life, a sound education and, indeed, the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Over the past two years, volatile food prices, the economic crisis, climate change and conflict have led to a dramatic and unacceptable rise in the number of people who cannot rely on getting the food they need to live, work and thrive. For the first time in history, more than one billion people are hungry.

Throughout the developing world, food prices remain stubbornly high. We must respond to the needs of the hungry, first by ensuring adequate political and financial support for emergency food assistance.

"Achieving food security in times of crisis" is the theme for this year's World Food Day and for the TeleFood campaign of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It emphasizes the need for even greater efforts to respect the dignity of those affected by poverty and hunger, and to support the committed women and men who often risk their lives to deliver help.

Second, we must invest in food production and distribution. Last year, I set up a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis. Its Comprehensive Framework for Action outlines a strategy to provide safety nets and assistance for smallholder farmers and to support longer-term agricultural productivity and resilience, social protection schemes, market access and fair trade.

Nations are mobilizing for action. In July, 26 countries and 14 multilateral organizations agreed to work together under the umbrella of the L'Aquila initiative on food security. Next month's World Summit on

Food Security in Rome is a further opportunity to focus on country-led and regional strategies, country-level partnerships and increased levels of assistance.

The challenges of food security demand multilateral commitment, creativity and leadership. At this time of crisis, I encourage all nations to pursue coordinated and comprehensive strategies for agricultural development and effective social protection so that vulnerable people women and children in particular – can get the food they need for nutritional security and well-being.