



For immediate release

29 January 2009

Right to Food recognized as essential to fight global hunger

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) and faith-based organizations and leaders around the world hailed the recognition, at the High Level Meeting on Food Security for All, of the essential role of the Right to Food in combating hunger.

In his closing remarks at the High Level Meeting in Madrid, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon challenged the international community to "...do better in 2009" and noted the "twin tracks" that need to be continued - meeting "urgent hunger and humanitarian needs by providing food and nutrition assistance and safety nets, while focusing on improving food production and smallholder agriculture." He then went on, "We should be ready to add a third track - the right to food - as a basis for analysis, action and accountability."

"We welcome this outcome and look forward to the concrete elaboration of how the Right to Food will be linked to the actions proposed by the UN High Level Task Force," said Rudolf Buntzel of the Church Development Service (EED) in Germany. "It is essential that this statement is much more than lip service, but will be made operational and guide actions at country level,"

Michael Windfur of Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) in Germany added, "We certainly hope that the inclusion of the Right to Food as a framework for action will lead to concrete actions that do not just tackle technical problems related to raising agricultural production, but also more politically sensitive issues such as fair access to resources like land and water."

Buntzel, Windfur and Stineke Oenema of ICCO (Interchurch Development Organization) in the Netherlands were faith-based delegates to the Madrid meeting advocating for more just policies to benefit the poorest and most vulnerable. They represent three member organizations of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, which has carried out groundbreaking work on the Right to Food, campaigned for trade justice and is launching a new four year campaign on food among the churches and Christian organizations around the world.

In response to the Madrid outcomes, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, reflected on the prayer for "daily bread" repeated by Christians everywhere, everyday: "When we pray for 'our' - rather than 'my' daily bread - we define our need for the minimum requirements for human dignity in explicitly communal terms. Adequate food must be a right for all, not a privilege for some."

In Madrid, some participants were promoting a new Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS). However, the relevance of a new global partnership for the people that suffer hunger was highly criticized by many civil society organizations and some governments. The establishment of the partnership was not formalized during the meeting and will undergo further discussion.

"Of course we are strongly in favor of better coordination," Oenema stated. "But we question if the complex process proposed during the conference (GPAFS) will lead to a more efficient structure rather than improving the functioning of the international organizations that currently have the lead in tackling hunger such as FAO, IFAD and WFP."

The UN Secretary-General called for urgent commitment and action. "The way forward must link actions to reduce hunger, improve food and nutrition security, broaden social protection for the vulnerable, improve agricultural production, and make trading systems work for the world's poorest," he said. "We must raise the

political profile of actions in all of these areas, advocating for finance, action and results."

For more information:

Dr. Rudolf Buntzel, Church Development Service (EED), Germany, + 49 228 8101 2355

Mr. Michael Windfuhr, Brot für die Welt, Germany, + 49 172 1425980

Ms. Stineke Oenema, ICCO (Interchurch Development Organization), The Netherlands, + 31 30 692 7947

Ms. Sara Speicher, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, + 44 7821 860 723

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on food and HIV and AIDS. The Alliance is based in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>

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