

**Introduction to the Issues Note on Food Security and Nutrition
Third Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals**

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On behalf of the UN Technical Support Team

Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today to introduce the Issues Note on Food Security and Nutrition. First let me thank our Co-Chairs for the opportunity to address all of you today. My introduction of the Issues Note will highlight a few of the key messages that also complement the important points made in the Keynote speech.

To begin, I would like to recall one of the key statements that emerged from Rio+20, that there can be no sustainable development if we do not eradicate hunger and poverty. The Rio outcomes also noted that we, as a global community, need to end hunger as a matter of urgency. Food security and nutrition are essential dimensions of sustainable development. We know that hunger can be ended sustainably within a generation. We live in a world that produces more than enough food to feed us all, yet we waste an enormous amount of food. At the same time, one in eight people in the world today, some 868 million people, are undernourished. Approximately two billion people, many of them children, suffer from micronutrient deficiencies.

I have three key messages for you that are further elaborated in the Issues Note. First, there are close links between poverty and hunger, particularly when food insecurity and undernutrition are primarily problems of access to food. Poverty reduction through inclusive economic growth is one of the most effective means for improving food security and nutrition. However, evidence suggests that poverty reduction alone will not end hunger. Specifically, poverty reduction may not improve the lives of the one billion hungry poor, nor the two billion people that suffer from micronutrient deficiencies.

My second message is that we can end hunger in our generation. Our priority needs to be focused on ensuring adequate nutrition from pregnancy through the first two years, or the first 1000 days. Even a short period of inadequate nutrition before the age of two has important effects on an individual's physical and mental development, with largely irreversible damage in terms of stunting and cognitive capacity. Such consequences impact not only the individual and the household, but also the longer term growth prospects of societies. Ultimately, this constrains the next generation's ability to play their full role in our economies and societies, and their ability to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. Clearly, we need a renewed effort to

eradicate hunger and focus on the nutrition of vulnerable groups, particularly before the age of two. While we can build upon our lessons learned, when we consider nutrition, we clearly need to find new ways to turn our vision of good nutrition for all into reality.

The third message is focused on the significant gender dimension to the challenges we face, as within gender, we also find solutions. Although we know that gender is about women, men, girls and boys, there is significant evidence that what we need to focus on is women and girls. Evidence clearly correlates gender equality and women's empowerment with improved nutrition and productivity gains, across countries and in a variety of contexts. Improving women's access to food, as well as access to natural resources, land, credit and other productive resources, has the potential to be a significant driver of economic productivity gains at national level. Women are agents of change, and we need to recognize that progress in gender equality strongly correlates with overall social wellbeing and improved nutrition.

For sustainable development, and to sustain life, we need new ideas now more than ever before. The MDGs provided a sound basis to go forward and it is clear that the international community has unfinished business, particularly when it comes to food security and nutrition. Moving forward, the Zero Hunger Challenge provides a vision of the future we want. This challenge, launched during the Rio+20 Conference nearly one year ago, presents an aspirational vision that should inform a new, universal post-2015 agenda. The challenge is based on five pillars: (1) 100% access to adequate food all year round; (2) zero stunted children under two years of age; (3) all food systems are sustainable; (4) 100% increase in farmer productivity and incomes; and (5) zero loss or waste of food. This vision is not just the future we want, but it is the future and world we *need*. We must now transform this broad vision into a goal, a sustainable development goal.