Mr. Chairman:

Food is one of the most basic human needs. The fundamental right to adequate food and its importance to human development and flourishing is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed consistently in different international declarations since then through a number of United Nations resolutions and reports. Matching the volume of reports are the numerous commitments to end hunger, commitments from national governments, international agencies and civil society. Yet in today’s world many nations still face periodic food crisis. Clearly more needs to be done.

In this regard, my Delegation welcomes the Secretary General’s report on Agricultural Development, Food Security and Nutrition (A/68/311) and its focus on continuing international efforts to reduce malnutrition and poverty in so many regions of the developing world. Moreover, the recent note by the Secretary General transmitting the interim report on the ‘Right to Food’ (A/68/288) has particular relevance.

Hunger, like all forms of poverty, is caused by exclusion. Consequently, we can only eliminate hunger and food insecurity by promoting inclusion. Here we could follow Pope Francis’ simple advice: “Every proposal must involve everyone” and we must leave “behind the temptations of power, wealth or self-interest” and instead serve “the human family, especially the needy and those suffering from hunger and malnutrition.”

In addressing the issue of agriculture development, food security and nutrition, my Delegation supports the principle of the human right to food, which requires this issue to be seen firstly through a human rights lens, which places the human person at the center of our understanding of this fundamental issue. In our efforts to promote “a life of dignity for all” we must work for agriculture policies that promote inclusion, respect for the dignity and rights of those still on the margins of today’s society, and the well-being of current and future generations.

By pointing out the problem of exclusion and the need for inclusion, we bring up the uncomfortable fact that hunger is not caused by the lack of sufficient food to feed every person on the planet. As Pope Francis noted: “It is a well-known fact that current levels of production are sufficient, yet millions of people are still suffering and dying of starvation. This [...] is truly scandalous. A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must

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1 Pope Francis, Address to participants in the 38th Conference of the FAO, 20 June 2013
2 A/68/202
be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being."³

Thus, while improvements in food production remains an important goal, food security will be achieved by only when we change social structures and when we learn to show greater solidarity towards the poor and the hungry. Hunger is not just a technical problem awaiting technological solutions. Hunger is a human problem that demands resolution based on our common humanity.

The tragedy of hunger amidst plenty is exacerbated by the excessive waste of economic resources, especially food. But there is also considerable waste in the overall system of production and distribution of food. The FAO estimates that 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted every year. Often this waste is due to the fact that wasting food can be more profitable than ensuring that food goes to those in extreme need. "Whenever food is thrown out," Pope Francis points out, "it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor, from the hungry!"⁴

Mr. Chairman:

In promoting a human rights based and humanitarian approach to food security, it is necessary to link food to non-discrimination and universal access. Too often, access to food becomes a weapon for controlling, at times even subjugating, populations, rather than a tool for building peaceful and prosperous communities.

To bring about an effective distribution of food, the principle of subsidiarity provides helpful guidance. This principle recommends that human activities be carried out at the most local and immediate level possible, so as to maximize participation. Larger entities have the responsibility to support smaller ones first, and only take over when these smaller groups are unable to carry out their activities effectively. Subsidiarity helps sustain food security because food security consists not solely in giving food to people; it means helping them become self-sufficient so that they provide their own food, either by growing it themselves or by exchanging for food the goods and services they provide. Thus, getting people involved in the process of solving food insecurity is an essential step in achieving this goal.

In conclusion, while there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution to food insecurity and hunger, there needs to be the one goal of food security for all so that there will be ever fewer people suffering from poverty and hunger in our world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

³ ibid.
⁴ Id.