Joint Statement by the United Nations Rome-based Agencies
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Mr. Chairman,

More than a decade ago, the world made halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger a target under the first MDG. This year’s report on the “State of Food Insecurity in the World” (SOFI) records progress towards that end. Although the number of people suffering from chronic hunger has fallen from 868 million (2010-2012) to 842 million (2011-2013), one in eight people in the world are still not getting enough food to conduct an active life. This figure remains unacceptably high.

Progress in reducing hunger reflects country and regional specificities in terms of economic conditions, infrastructure, the organization of food production, the presence of social provisions and political and institutional stability. Marked differences across regions persist. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, with modest progress in recent years. Western Asia shows no progress, while Southern Asia and Northern Africa show slow progress. Significant reductions in both the estimated number and prevalence of undernourishment have occurred in most countries of Eastern and South Eastern Asia, as well as in Latin America.

Food insecurity and malnutrition can be exacerbated by price and income swings that can significantly affect the poor and hungry. When prices rise consumers often shift to cheaper, less-nutritious foods, heightening the risks of micronutrient deficiencies and other forms of malnutrition, which can have long-term adverse effects on people’s health, development and productivity. In addition, a step change is needed in efforts that create a ‘climate-smart food system’ that can better withstand natural disasters and climate-change related shocks. The costs of short term food crises mitigation will grow, if meaningful investments for more resilient food systems are further delayed. These trends also indicate the increasing importance of social protection floors and safety nets in the global food security agenda. Key measures to address these global challenges include:

1. Dealing with the long-term issues of how we produce, trade and consume food in the face of population growth, increasing demand and climate change.
2. Strengthening policies and programmes that strengthen the resilience of populations to shocks, especially the most vulnerable, including support for food security and nutrition and rebuild livelihoods as a part of crisis response.

3. Increased investments and improved policies aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, especially for smallholders, combined with better/increased access to productive assets including land, financial services and technology, as well as access to markets.

4. Ensuring access to nutritious food by the poorest people, especially during the first 1,000 days from the start of a woman’s pregnancy until her child’s second birthday, to help break the cycle of poverty and malnutrition.

We also must factor in other forms of malnutrition - specifically overweight and obesity – that are rapidly rising. Globally, more than 1.4 billion adults are overweight. The increasing prevalence of overweight and the closely related increases in non-communicable disease is at least partly a consequence of changing diets and lifestyles.

The importance of empowering women also needs greater attention. This is particularly important in rural areas since women represent 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce worldwide. Rural women play a key role in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being.

A lot still needs to be done, but there are reasons to be optimistic. Hunger has decreased despite the difficult economic situation of the last few years. The Rome-based agencies (WFP, IFAD and FAO) and our partners have policies and programmes in place to help governments and communities address these challenges, cognizant of the need to balance both long and short-term approaches in our collective effort to empower women, poor farmers and consumers.

Furthermore, the Rome-based agencies remain actively engaged in international development processes, and continue to support countries in special situations such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, including through our commitment to strengthen South-South and triangular Cooperation. We will also continue to promote partnerships and enhanced dialogue among all stakeholders, to ensure strengthened outcomes in relation to agriculture, food security and nutrition.

Collective action is the only way forward. Movements such as Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) is helping to build unprecedented global momentum to reduce child under-nutrition. Over 40 national governments have expressed their commitment to prioritize nutrition actions through broad and coordinated approaches that support nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive development.

The International Conference on Nutrition (ICN+21) in November 2014 will bring various stakeholders together to review progress made since 1992, reflect on the existing and the new challenges and opportunities presented by the shifts in the global economy; in food systems, and consider advances in science and technology. We are working to ensure that the conference will mobilize the necessary political will to improve global nutrition outcomes.

As evidenced, much is being done but much more is needed. Food insecurity and malnutrition are universal challenges that must be firmly anchored in the post-2015 agenda and this has
been well-recognized in the range of recent reports and consultations relevant to the discussion. The Special Event on MDGs convened by the President of the General Assembly on 25 September confirmed that the post-2015 development agenda must free “humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.”

In this context allow me to inform the Committee that at the recent 40th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) member states encouraged the Committee to actively engage in the post-2015 development agenda process, thereby bringing the unique experience of this multi-stakeholder platform to the debate and to support the inclusion of a goal reflecting food security and nutrition issues among the sustainable development goals.

By committing to the implementation of the Secretary-General’s Zero Hunger Challenge we can solve the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition. It can help guide our stepped up efforts to reach the hunger target of MDG1 and provides useful support as we plan for the post-2015 development agenda – one that will help to transform and strengthen national economies through more sustainable agricultural practices and put us on a new course to make food insecurity and malnutrition history.

Thank you.