National Statement by

Ms. Edel Dwyer

Second Committee

Item 25: Agriculture Development, Food Security and Nutrition
Madame Chairman,

At the outset I would like to congratulate the Secretary General for his comprehensive report. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

As outlined in the Report, food insecurity and malnutrition manifests itself in various ways in different regions of the world and has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. The combined forces of drought, conflict and high food prices will continue to impact on peoples’ food security and their ability to access adequate and nutritious food.

To address food insecurity requires an integrated approach. It requires interventions and strong policies from local to global levels. It is imperative that short-term relief is situated within a longer term strategy to reduce the vulnerability to hunger and food insecurity.

Ending global hunger remains the single greatest challenge we face as an international community. It is at the heart of Ireland’s foreign policy.

Ireland has elevated the issues of food and nutrition security within its aid programme in recent years and last year met the target of directing 20% of the Irish Aid budget to hunger-related activities. The achievement of this target is a significant milestone, and clearly marks Ireland out in global terms as a nation that is committed deeply to the fight against hunger and under-nutrition. All of Ireland’s work on hunger is underscored by the need to address undernutrition and to ensure that the hunger related programmes and food security projects we support are not merely focused on quantity but also on quality – nutritional quality.

In April, Ireland hosted a major international conference to bring together the hunger, nutrition and climate agenda. We invited policy makers and grassroots practitioners, so that we could listen to and learn from the very people who are enduring the crisis of failed crops, inundation, erosion, rising food prices hunger and under nutrition.

By placing people at the centre of these discussions, a clear picture of the challenges facing the most vulnerable people emerges. Empowering grassroots practitioners and giving them the right platform to discuss their realities and solutions makes them the most convincing advocates for the policy change and action. It gave us a very vivid sense of the day-to-day realities facing the most vulnerable people and the most fragile communities.

As a follow up to this, Ireland pledged to double its spend on nutrition by 2020. The return on investment in nutrition is very high. Good nutrition has a powerful lasting effect on a country’s stability and economic prosperity.
The three areas where Ireland contributes to reducing global hunger include:

- Boosting smallholder agricultural productivity of poor smallholder, and in particular women, farmers in sub-Saharan Africa
- Targeting undernutrition in infants, children and mothers
- Promoting governance and leadership to reduce global hunger at both national and international levels.

**Smallholder farmers, especially women,** must be at the heart of any sustainable solution to global hunger. Support to smallholder farmers will be most effective if the entire food production cycle is considered; in other words, as part of a **value chain approach.** We should support **pro-poor agricultural research** and most importantly, programmes which ensure that this research is **accessible to poor smallholder farmers** and women in particular.

We need to improve their **access to credit and farm inputs,** so they can benefit from new technologies and practices. We must support **climate-smart agricultural practices.** And we should encourage smallholder farmers’ links with the private sector, so they have both **access to inputs, and links to viable markets** to trade surplus produce.

We know if given equal rights, access to land and other critical inputs and an equal say in decision-making, women can be powerful agents of change. **Engaging and empowering women** farmers must be a cornerstone of any strategy to boost agricultural activity.

However, we should be very wary of focusing exclusively on increasing agricultural productivity and simple measures of food security. Too often, increases in agricultural productivity fail to translate into **improved nutritional outcomes** at household level. The **improved health and nutrition** of the poorest of the poor must remain our goal.

Comprehensive initiatives such as the **Scaling Up Nutrition** or SUN Movement, of which Ireland is a strong and active supporter, have real potential to reduce undernutrition. The increased political commitment to tackling undernutrition across the 43 high burden SUN countries is a significant achievement.

Ireland encourages all stakeholders in all relevant sectors from health to education, from water and sanitation to gender, and from agriculture to social protection, **to champion the integration of nutrition** into all of their food security work to ensure that we deliver on the full potential to attain nutrition security for all.

Thank You.