

**Remarks by the President of the Economic and Social Council,  
H.E. Ms. Sylvie Lucas,  
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the UN**

**World Food Day Observance  
Achieving food security in times of crisis**

**New York, 29 October 2009**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to join you today in the observance of the World Food Day in New York. I commend FAO on the theme of this year's World Food Day, "Achieving food security in times of crisis." In view of the more than 1 billion hungry persons in the world today, it is most opportune to reflect on the need to address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity, and to find durable solutions. With the 2015 MDG target date fast approaching, the number of hungry people is increasing rather than decreasing. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million; and in developed countries 15 million, according to FAO's annual hunger report.

We need both immediate action to meet humanitarian needs and longer-term action to increase agricultural production and to ensure food security. At no time more than the present, has there been a need for greater investment in agriculture. I am pleased to see that recent discussions on food security are moving towards steps in this direction, notably the Madrid High Level Meeting held earlier this year and the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy. No doubt this dialogue will continue at the upcoming FAO World Summit on Food Security in November.

ECOSOC is the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for economic and social questions and the central mechanism for system-wide coordination. ECOSOC is expected to respond rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields. General Assembly resolution 61/16 of 2006 makes provision for ECOSOC, through its Annual Ministerial Review, to undertake a cross sectoral, thematic examination of development issues related to the outcomes of major UN summits and conferences, to review progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of those conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and to assess its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits. It is

because of this inter-connection of the MDGs that ECOSOC is an ideal place to assess their implementation vis-à-vis cross-cutting issues.

It is also in this context that the Council has previously taken up the issue of food security. On 20 May, 2008 ECOSOC thus held a Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis, in which a wide range of stake-holders participated. A Presidential Statement was issued by my predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Leo Merores, which called for a set of immediate, medium- and long-term measures aimed at improving agricultural productivity and increasing food production.

During this year's 2009 Annual Ministerial Review on Global Public Health, there were numerous references to the ongoing food crisis and its implications for good health. Hunger and malnutrition constitute, indeed, the number one risk to health worldwide - a greater risk than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. It was recognized that the food crisis and continuing food insecurity in many countries have had broad negative social and economic consequences, including on global health, especially overall nutrition levels of populations in developing countries. In this context, the role for agriculture was seen as central for reducing poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. These key messages were also included in the Council's Ministerial Declaration, which recognized *inter alia* that good public health is better achieved through a combination of good public health policies, including multi-sectoral policies that stress better nutrition, safe drinking water, hygiene, sanitation and sustainable urbanization, and effectively combat major risk factors. Ministers at ECOSOC reaffirmed their "commitment to eliminating hunger and to securing food for all, today and tomorrow..."

Even though food prices have declined overall, they remain high in developing countries and there is still the possibility of another food crisis if concerted action is not taken to achieve food security. Food security is not only about alleviating hunger, it is a complex and interrelated issue that concerns peace and well-being, economic security, environmental stability, the empowerment of women and sustainable development. Barely an hour ago we have concluded, in this room, a very lively and interesting discussion on the "Food and economic crises in post-conflict countries", where we discussed the risks to stability and peace posed by economic and food price shocks and possible actions to take to build resilience in these countries.

Next year, the Economic and Social Council will focus its work on the issue of "Gender equality and empowerment of women" and, no doubt, an important aspect of the discussions will be the role of women in achieving food security, given that most of world's food is produced by small holder farmers, many of whom are women.

I can assure you that ECOSOC will continue to do its part to ensure that the attainment of food security remains paramount on our agenda, and to work closely with all stake-holders, including the United Nations High-level Task Force on the Food Security Crisis of the Secretary-General and the various specialized Agencies.

I thank you.