SUMMARY NOTE

WILL FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA BE ACHIEVED BY SUSTAINED, INCREASED, AND MORE EFFECTIVE AID?

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Address Read by: Ambassador Sigurd Illing, Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union, Uganda
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“Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa by 2020” is the subject of this Conference. And I, as European Commissioner for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, have received the invitation to address this audience.

Will food security in Africa be achieved by sustained, increased, and more effective aid?
I would like first to reflect on the concept of food security.

Food security encompasses many dimensions (trade, agriculture, environment, health, employment): indeed to increase their access to food people require broader employment opportunities; individual food security depends on addressing consumer and health issues; environmental threats, limitations, and opportunities must be considered to ensure sustainable food production and trade opportunities are key incentives for growth and for the integration of African countries into the global economy. All these aspects are fundamental blocks in a comprehensive fight against hunger.

Yet, other important elements need to be taken into account for the eradication of poverty: the elimination of inequalities, building of democracies and good governance, respect for Human Rights, and creating peace and security. The mutually reinforcing relationship between poverty, food insecurity, and natural resource degradation, on the one hand, and social and political instability and conflict, on the other, is yet to be fully recognized. Addressing hunger and nutrition must consider and reflect the complex nature of food insecurity.

What is the role of development aid to meet this complex challenge?
If we look at ODA in global terms, we realize that its financial volume is lower than remittances from migrants, lower than private investments, and it roughly represents one-third of what OECD countries pay in support of their domestic agriculture.

The answer, however, is that ODA still matters and very much so for many developing countries. Our task then is to fulfill the commitments reached in Monterrey for increased resources, to make ODA more relevant and more efficient by harmonizing donor’s procedures, and more cost effective by, among other things, adopting the principles of untying of aid, including public procurement and food aid. These are issues that the EU is championing in international fora.

Your task as African leaders is to find African solutions for the problems Africa is facing. We can only support your own efforts. This is why the concept of “partnership” and “ownership” are two of the pillars of our relations with ACP countries.

Let me now introduce the Commission’s policy and approach to food security.
For the Community and its Members States, food security is fundamentally a dimension of poverty. It requires a broad-based policy approach for sustainable development in view of tackling the root causes of the
problem. It is essential to address simultaneously the issues of food *availability* (production, strategic reserves, trade), *access* to food (economic growth, employment, income), response to *crises* situations, and *nutritional* problems.

The important role of women for food security must also be recognized. Farmers are still perceived as “males” by policymakers, development actors, and those who deliver agriculture services. Women have less access to resources such as land, water, credit, and training hindering their production capacity and their role in promoting increased food security.

**Agriculture** and the rural economy constitute the engine of economic growth in most African countries and the basis for their integration into the world economy. However, in view of contributing effectively to poverty reduction and food security, it is essential that agriculture becomes an integral part of a wider rural development strategy encompassing nonagricultural elements of the rural economy as well as the social sectors.

**Trade** expansion plays an important role to foster broad economic growth, both developing countries and countries in transition need to be integrated in the world trading system to reap benefits from economic growth.

The EC reiterates its commitment to achieve these goals, along the lines agreed in the Doha Development Agenda. Comprehensive negotiations are to be pursued on the three trade pillars: market access, export subsidies, and trade-distorting domestic support while taking into account non-trade concerns. Special and differential treatments for developing countries need to be an integral part of the negotiations, to be operationally effective, and to take account of their development needs, including food security and rural development.

The EC is the world’s largest buyer of agricultural products and food. In particular, the EC is the largest buyer from developing countries, to a large extent as the result of granted trade preferences. All imports (except arms), **including all raw and processed products** from the 49 poorest countries have unlimited duty-free access to EC markets. We call on similar regimes to be applied by other developed countries.

A few words now on how we see the role of *food aid within our food security policy*. We, in the Commission, are convinced that food aid is not an appropriate instrument to foster long-term food security and, as a result, we have reduced our supplies of food aid-in-kind to emergency interventions. Contrary to other donors, we strongly support the decoupling of food aid provisions from the use of grain surpluses in our countries and we encourage the purchase of food in the surplus producing areas in developing countries. This is not to say that food aid does not remain important in emergency food shortages, in post-crisis situation as well as a component of safety net strategies for vulnerable sections of the population. The European Commission has a budget of roughly 450 million euros annually for food aid and food security interventions targeted to a limited number of countries, most of them in Africa. The European Community is the second largest donor to the Food Aid Convention.

**Let me now turn on the specific challenges facing Africa.**

If we look at the percentage of undernourished population in the developing countries, we see that, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, these have decreased during the last decades in most of the regions. On the other hand, life expectancy has declined as a result of HIV/AIDS, the worst affected countries being in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, emergencies continue to have a significant impact on progress towards halving the number of people suffering from hunger and natural disasters still have a devastating effect in many regions. Thus, the challenges facing Africa in meeting food security are enormous.

This brings me to the conclusion that our approach to food security in Africa needs to be different. Our dialogue needs to be more relevant and our conferences need to deliver concrete outputs. And today, the **African Union (AU)** makes the difference which we believe can bring new hope for Africa.

Development finally depends on developing countries’ own actions. Sound policies and improved governance, fighting corruption, and improving human rights are essential for progress. We have, therefore, warmly welcomed the NEPAD initiative, and even more so the launching of the AU. You all know how keen the European Union is to support the African Union and engage in a meaningful EU-Africa dialogue.

The African Union has already gone a lone way. The AU Commission has been elected and its new vision and mission have emerged under the leadership of President Konare. We share common goals regarding the region’s security and prosperity, and we have the financial and technical means to work jointly towards these goals. These issues were discussed last week in Brussels between the whole of the European Commission and the AU Commission.

The abilities of the AU to deal with peace and security are crucial for the future of Africa. Conflicts are damaging the image of Africa and hindering any prospects of development. Armed conflict and civil strife not
only cause humanitarian crisis for millions of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees, they also cause agricultural output losses and increased food insecurity. The fact that the number of food insecure living in complex political emergencies is growing is a major constraint to reducing hunger.

Similarly, the African Union sees agriculture as an important driving force for social and economic development across the continent. I commend in particular the commitment taken by the African Heads of State in Maputo to channel 10% of national budgetary resources to agriculture. If agriculture has to fulfill its promise of being the driving force of economic growth, it needs greater attention in development policy and priorities.

Africans are entitled to adequate food and greater opportunities to raise out of poverty, and they have the right to better education and health care. We can and must put an end to hunger, ignorance, and pandemics. For these legitimate expectations to be met, we need to see action and action starts at the country level.

Although international and regional dimensions are important, in particular as concerns trade, management of shared resources, research, and early warning systems, the interventions needed in support of food security have primarily a national dimension.

Therefore, the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies needs to rely on a variety of instruments capable of addressing the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. There will only be more resources available to fight food insecurity if African countries make this goal a priority in their national development strategies. Coordination and cooperation between partners in Africa in this respect are essential for success.

It is my sincere hope that this Conference will help us to better understand and identify key actions about how to improve food security in Africa and help us to mobilize the political will required to see these priorities implemented. Our plans have to build on the work of recent years, starting with the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda we set for ourselves in Doha, Monterrey, and Johannesburg.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.