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Population, food security, nutrition and
sustainable development

Statement submitted by World Information Transfer, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Population, food security, nutrition, and sustainable development are collectively some of the most critical and pressing issues facing the global community. As we approach 2050, we expect to see the earth's population grow to 10 billion people we must stop and address these four critical areas individually and collectively. These areas are undoubtedly the key to growing a healthy, sustainable, and just planet.

Population: Each day we add approximately 200,000 more people to the planet, these individuals are often born into regions that are already stressed by lack of resources, education, and decent work. The finite resources of the earth cannot sustain a global annual population increase as we have witnessed since 1970.

Food security: Not having adequate food has been a constant threat to the global community with nearly 850 million individuals who are food insecure, the recent COVID-19 crisis will increase this number, estimates are from 120 million to 240 million people will become food insecure as a result of the global pandemic. With this lack of calories comes the other global crisis surrounding food, the equal and sometimes less apparent global obesity epidemic.

Nutrition: With nearly 1.4 billion people who are considered to be obese, national health care systems in nearly all countries are health care system under stress and will not be able to handle the surge in noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases, stroke, coronary artery diseases, most cancers, and related illnesses. In short, the global quality of life in nearly all countries will be threatened. Obesity is considered a non-communicable disease; it can be addressed with education and resources and changes in human behaviour and access to healthy and nutritious food. Finally, the fourth and equally important part of this CPD54 written statement, sustainable development.

Sustainable development: Is unattainable without stable and thoughtful population growth, access to family planning resources and healthy and nutritious, balanced and culturally appropriate diets. All these components are intimately related, and they can be addressed by different agencies and in concert can make the globe a healthy and sustainable place.

Methods for growing more nutritious and healthy food are available and continue to be developed around the world in public and private universities and research organizations. Major foundations like Gates Foundation, as well as the foundations run by Rockefeller, Pew, Ford, Oxfam, CARITAS, and Heifer International and many others are working to promote sustainable and practical methods to produce food. Major divisions of the United Nations and World Bank such as Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme, and others are partnering with the researchers and the large donors to take these programs to the communities most in need. The results are remarkable, and their impact has been significant. Globally, farmers have increased their yields and have started to do this with an eye for reducing carbon footprint of agriculture. In fact, it is estimated that there is adequate food to supply all the earth's residents, but one-fourth or more of the global harvest continues to be lost to spoilage, insects, and diseases. This number has remained constant now for three generations. Some would argue then that the key to all this is improving the distribution, since there is already enough food and it simply needs to get to those who need it. At face value that is correct, but as we see with the growing obesity epidemic it is also important to produce and distribute healthy food. Healthy food without a program to educate on the proper and careful nutrition is not going to be effective.

Human behaviour is hard to change, and basic nutritional programs similar to the ones promoted by the FAO and USDA are all still very much needed. When farmers are given new production tools, they too must be educated. The old saying every solution comes with its own set of problems is very true for new farming methods. Agrochemicals are an important tool in the farmers' toolbox, but so is basic instruction on integrated pest control, organic production, and care and selection of cultivars. Infrastructure to bring fresh and wholesome products to market, especially in more remote regions, is also critical. In many cases value added activities at the production site will allow commodities to be shipped across a country or even across a continent.

Women must be provided with family planning resources and access to reproductive health care and women must also be given access to education. It has been demonstrated over and over that increasing educational opportunities for women increase household income, better learning opportunities for the children of these educated women and better outcomes as far as maternal and child health. Also, it is estimated that nearly 70 percent of the food production in developing countries is done by women. Women need the financial opportunities and access to capital to improve their production and to be able to use new farming techniques, better cultivars and ultimately have access to better markets for a great return for their products and goods.

Population, food security, nutrition, and sustainable development are key elements of the planet's survival. They are of equal importance and when a coordinated and thoughtful approach is implemented, we can expect a healthier planet, a planet with better educated people who are well fed and productive. This will lead to a more peaceful and just world, with less conflict and more harmony.
