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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO SUMMIT OF THE WORLD'S REGIONS  
ON FOOD SECURITY**

**Dakar, Senegal, 18 January 2010**

*Delivered by Mr. David Nabarro, Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
on Food Security and Nutrition*

It is a pleasure to greet the participants in this important meeting.

At the start of this meeting I would like to share my sorrow at the suffering being experienced by the people of Haiti at this very difficult time and my wholehearted commitment to ensure that the United Nations makes the best possible contribution both to immediate needs and to long term recovery. This will include seeking to ensure that all Haitian people are able to enjoy food security.

In recent years, we have witnessed the collapse of food security for several of the world's most vulnerable communities. The global economic downturn has caused high food prices and reduced buying power – a disastrous combination. Hundreds of millions more people cannot afford to feed themselves or their families.

Many factors have played their part in creating this crisis. One of them is the inability of farmers to produce enough food to meet demand. Farmers face volatile markets which offer prices that are sometimes too low to cover their costs. Meanwhile, seeds and fertilizers can be too expensive. Those who produce food often experience difficulties in getting their goods to markets at the right price, since the necessary infrastructure is missing, the structure of trading systems works against them and the institutions they need to overcome such challenges are in their infancy.

Smallholder farmers are hit particularly hard. Their problems are exacerbated by credit shortages, lack of access to technology and the impact of climate change.

And women – who do most of the farming in the world's poorest communities – suffer their own particular ill-effects from food insecurity. When times are difficult, they must make stark choices between childcare and income-earning. Disproportionate numbers of women and children experience under-nutrition and nutritional deficiency. We must do a better job of listening to these smallholders and women farmers, and involving them in our response.

But there is some good news. Civil society, the private sector and governments are working more concertedly at several levels. World leaders have become increasingly

outspoken on the need for a sustained response to food and nutrition insecurity. Africa's leaders have committed themselves to increasing investments in agriculture, infrastructure and food processing, especially for smallholders, and to strengthening social protection programmes, safety nets and direct assistance to the hungry. Similar twin-track initiatives have emerged in Asia and Latin America.

World leaders at last year's G20 summits in London and Pittsburgh, and at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila in July, agreed on a comprehensive, country-led and coordinated approach to food security, and on a programme of long-term investment to support it. It is at the local and regional levels that such initiatives need the greatest support.

I commend President Wade, the Government of Senegal, and the Forum of Global Associations of Regions for convening this meeting, which is an opportunity to engage in decentralized cooperation on food security. The UN system is here in full force -- FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNDP, the World Bank and others. They have also been working together in my High-Level Task Force on food security. We are all strongly committed to working with you to help those at risk enjoy food and nutrition security, and to build up their resilience in the face of today's grave economic, climatic and environmental threats.

**PRESENTATION TO THE SUMMIT OF THE WORLD'S REGIONS ON FOOD SECURITY BY DAVID NABARRO, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

**Worldwide Action for Food Security**

Too many people in today's world are unable to enjoy their right to food – they have no food security.

They are “Food Secure” FIRST when they have sufficient food available, SECOND are able to access that food when they need it, THIRD can use this food to provide the nutrients needed to keep their bodies going, grow well, and FOURTH are assured that food and nutrient supplies are stable. All four dimensions of food security are vital to ensuring that numbers of hungry stop increasing, and levels of malnutrition are reduced.

Food insecurity is costly. It is a drain on any nation's efforts to promote economic resilience and development. A malnourished community's children face disadvantages for the rest of their lives: malnourished people cannot work to their full potential.

Improving food security involves many sectors: it brings together those involved in farming, food production and processing, food distribution and marketing, social protection and safety nets, public health and nutrition. By farmers we mean all who are involved in crop production, livestock, fisheries and forests.

Improving food security engages many stakeholders: including farmers organizations, agri-businesses, civil society, researchers and governments.

Comprehensive Action for Food Security is now being taken forward through a worldwide movement. For this movement to grow and be strong it must be centred at the community and local level. Why? Because patterns of food insecurity vary within nations and the best responses draw on local level political systems, institutions and actors. Local governments and their partners have a vital role to play in assessing food insecurity and in planning concerted responses.

The movement must increasingly be built on the voices and views of those affected by food insecurity and damage to food systems – particularly smallholder farmers. Those of us who seek to make a difference must at all times be listening to what they have to say.

The movement will be most effective if coordinated at all levels – in ways that ensure all within the movement work to a common strategy, and seek to harmonize and synergize their efforts.

The movement is often referred to as the Global Partnership on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. It is based on positive examples from national and regional levels. Examples of specific national and regional programmes include Hunger Zero in Latin America and national and regional programmes in Asia, as well as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme which has become an example of regional cooperation and leadership in Africa.

The movement is being built on strong political leadership – from world leaders as well as from community leaders. Within the African Union, ASEAN, MERCOSUR and the European Union leaders have pledged that they will make long-term efforts to tackle food insecurity within their nations. Most recently, in the last six months of 2009, the leaders of the G8 and G20 has together committed significant financial resources over the next three years to this movement. \$22 billion worth of investment has been pledged over the three years from July 2009.

Support from international organizations: within the UN system, FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNDP, UNICEF, the International Financial Institutions, the World Trade Organization and other intergovernmental bodies are fully engaged. They have come together in the Secretary General's High Level Task Force and are working for a Comprehensive Framework which gives priority both to immediate and long-term outcomes, and to all the elements of food security. Many farmers' organizations, such as ROPPA, are committed to a comprehensive approach which prioritizes the needs of smallholders. Non-Governmental Organizations maintain a deep involvement trying to ensure that the political commitment is fully sustained. .

At the November 2009 World Summit on Food Security (WFS) five Rome principles were agreed as a basis for the movement. These are support for country and region-led processes, promotion of the comprehensive approach, coordination of actors at all levels, a strong role for the multilateral system and increased investments in food security. The UN system and the international financial institutions are now doing their best to help ensure that different groups work effective together to invest in food security along the lines of these principles.

To improve coordination and country support the WFS agreed to revitalize the Committee on World Food Security and create a High Level panel of Experts to provide it with the scientific evidence it needs. In September 2009 the G20 asked the World Bank to establish a multi-donor financing mechanism that would make the best use of the capacities in the UN system and offer nations with more predictable means of support.

The agenda ahead of us is challenging: Invest in agriculture systems that take account of the needs of women and smallholders. Invest in social protection schemes and safety nets that function when people are unable to access the food they need. Invest in markets and trading systems that work in the interests of poorer consumers and producers – as well as their communities and their nations. Invest in means for engaging the private sector, humanitarian groups, producer entities and different parts of government from

local, sub-state and national levels. It is at the sub-national level that this effort is often being advanced.

Decentralized actors have an enormous impact on food security in many nations – and prevent many local level and national crises. They are most effective if the work in ways coordinated with others under the leadership of national authorities. Crises become globally significant when local level actions and movements break down and cannot contribute to national Food Security in ways that have a sustained impact.

I anticipate that this meeting will seek ways to enable decentralized actors to contribute best to food security. It will also find ways to enable decentralized actors to operate within the emerging global movement. It will be the start of a long term process. I wish you well in this important task and look forward to staying involved in your vital work.