

## EMPTY PROMISES:

### The “Rome Declaration on World Food Security” in 1996 and today’s realities

When representatives of 186 countries (112 of them heads of state) met in Rome in November 1996, their declared aim was to secure a political commitment to tackle the underlying issues causing widespread hunger and malnutrition. They committed themselves to the time-bound, monitorable, yet modest goal of halving hunger by 2015:

*“We, the heads of state and Government or our representatives, gathered at the World Food Summit ..., reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.*

*We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015.”*

These highest-level pledges were then formulated within seven commitments, which in turn were supported by 27 specific objectives and 182 proposed actions. But despite the abundance of generous intentions, by September of 2000 when it was time to meet to assess progress “few, if any of the 91 countries and nine international organisations...were able to claim substantive progress in implementing their World Food Summit Commitments”<sup>1</sup>.

Going through the commitments made, this paper highlights the contrast between the language used then and the actual achievements today, proving how low the level of real support is, and consequently the failure in, fighting hunger effectively.

## *Commitment 1.*

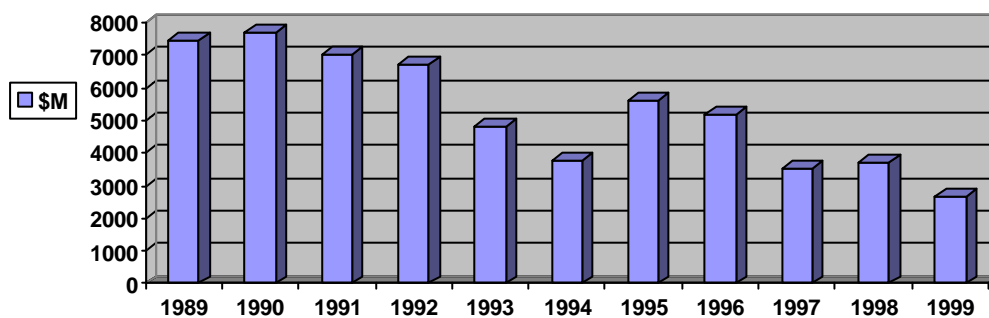
*we will ensure an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of women and men, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all;*

### **Reality:**

Official Development Assistance has decreased since 1990 from 0.33% to 0.25% of the Gross National Product of OECD Countries, to the detriment of the majority of the developing countries, especially the least developed countries in Africa who now receive almost no private inflows.

**Total agricultural aid from developed nations to developing nations has more than halved over the past ten years - and the trend continues**

### **Official Development Assistance – All Donors (Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)**



**1989/1999**

*Source OECD 2001*

## *Commitment 2.*

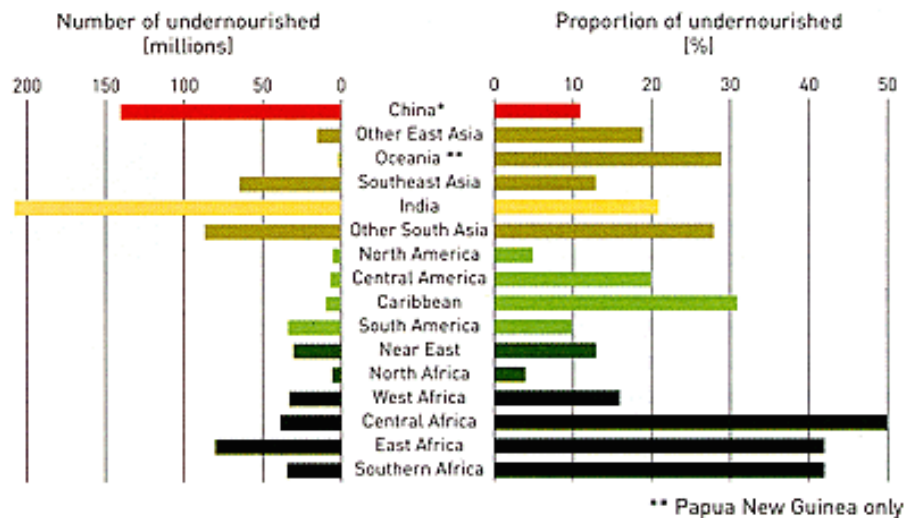
*we will implement policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality and improving physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food and its effective utilisation;*

### **Reality:**

**The actual number of undernourished people in Africa is expected to increase between now and 2015**

Although the prevalence of under nourishment in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to decline from 34 percent of the population in 1996-98 to 22 percent in 2015, high population growth rates mean that the actual number of undernourished people could increase slightly between now and 2015 (FAO)

## Number and proportion of undernourished, by region and subregion, 1996-98



Source: FAO

## The absolute number of people living in poverty has increased since the World Food Summit (1996 to 1998)

### Population Living Below \$1.08 a day (1993 purchasing power parity)

	Poverty rate (% below \$1.08)					Number of poor (1,000,000)				
	1987	1990	1993	1996	1998	1987	1990	1993	1996	1998
East Asia & (exclude China)	26.60	27.58	25.24	14.93	15.32	415.13	452.45	431.91	265.13	278.32
East Europe & Central Asia	0.24	1.56	3.95	5.12	5.14	1.07	7.14	18.26	23.82	23.98
Latin America	15.33	16.80	15.31	15.63	15.57	63.66	73.76	70.79	75.99	78.16
Middle East & North Africa	11.53	9.28	8.41	7.81	7.32	24.99	21.99	21.54	21.35	20.85
South Asia	44.94	44.01	42.39	42.26	39.99	474.41	495.11	505.08	531.65	522.00
sub-Saharan Africa	46.61	47.67	49.68	48.53	46.30	217.22	242.31	273.29	288.97	290.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.69</b>	<b>29.32</b>	<b>28.50</b>	<b>24.86</b>	<b>24.27</b>	<b>1196.48</b>	<b>1292.74</b>	<b>1320.88</b>	<b>1206.92</b>	<b>1214.18</b>

(Source: Global Poverty Monitoring World Bank)

## Children still undernourished despite record global food production

After 30 years of rapid growth in agricultural production, the world can produce enough food to provide every person with more than 2 700 Calories per day a level which is normally sufficient to ensure that all have access to adequate food, yet in South Asia over 50% of children are underweight and stunted due to the basic lack of food. (FAO)

## Millions still suffer the consequences of nutrient deficiency

- Iron deficiency anaemia affects approximately 1.5 billion people, mostly women and children.<sup>2</sup>
- Iodine deficiency disorders affect about 740 million people worldwide.<sup>3</sup>
- Vitamin A deficiency blindness affects around 2.8 million children under five years old. More than 200 million people are considered vitamin A deficient.<sup>4</sup>
- Calcium deficiency in pregnant and lactating women can affect the development of their children, and appears as osteoporosis later in life.<sup>5</sup>
- Severe vitamin C deficiency, scurvy, is mostly a problem in very deprived and refugee populations.<sup>6</sup>
- 200 million children under the age of five are affected by acute or chronic protein and calorie deficiency.<sup>7</sup>

### *Commitment 3.*

*we will pursue participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development policies and practices in high and low potential areas, which are essential to adequate and reliable food supplies at the household, national, regional and global levels, and combat pests, drought and desertification, considering the multifunctional character of agriculture;*

### **Reality:**

#### **Agricultural land degrades as farming continues to intensify**

About 85 percent of the world's agricultural land contains areas degraded by erosion, salinization, compaction, nutrient depletion, biological degradation, or pollution over the last 50 years. About 34 percent of all agricultural land contains areas only lightly degraded; 43 percent contains moderately degraded areas; and 9 percent contains strongly or extremely degraded areas. The extent of agricultural soil degradation raises questions about the long-term capacity of agro-ecosystems to produce food.<sup>8</sup>

Agroecosystems cover more than a quarter of the global land area, but almost three-quarters of the land has poor soil fertility and about half has steep terrain.<sup>9</sup>

While the global expansion of agricultural area has been modest in recent decades, intensification has been rapid, as irrigated area increased and fallow time decreased to produce more output per hectare.<sup>10</sup>

Agriculture faces an enormous challenge to meet the food needs of an additional 1.7 billion people over the next 20 years.<sup>11</sup>

## **Intensive agriculture increases its appetite for toxic chemicals**

### **World Pesticide Consumption, 1983–98 Value (US\$ millions)**

Region	1983	1993	1998
North America	3,991	7,377	8,980
Latin America	1,258	2,307	3,000
Western Europe	5,847	7,173	9,000
Eastern Europe	2,898	2,571	3,190
Africa/Mideast	942	1,258	1,610
Asia/Oceania	5,572	6,814	8,370
World Total	20,507	27,500	34,150

Source: (a) Yudelman et al. 1998:10. (b) IFPRI calculation based on Yudelman et al. 1998:10 and FAOSTAT 1999

## **Lack of rural livelihoods forces an exodus from the countryside to the cities**

According to the UNDPs *World Urbanization Prospects: the 1999 Revision*, most of the population increase expected during 2000-2030 will be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions whose population will likely rise from 1.9 billion in 2000 to 3.9 billion in 2030. The urban population of the more developed regions is expected to increase very slowly, passing from 0.9 billion in 2000 to 1 billion in 2030.

During 2000-2030, the world's urban population will grow at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent, nearly double the rate expected for the total population of the world (1 per cent per year). At that rate of growth, the world's urban population will double in 38 years.

Growth will be particularly rapid in the urban areas of less developed regions, averaging 2.3 per cent per year during 2000-2030, consistent with a doubling time of 30 years. In contrast, the rural population of the less developed regions is expected to grow very slowly, at just 0.1 per cent per year during 2000-2030.

### ***Commitment 4.***

***we will strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system;***

### **Reality:**

### **The World trade system is failing to deliver the basics for millions of the worlds poorest**

The "Agreement on Agriculture" and the attempts of developing countries to comply has produced clear winners and clear losers. The poor and food insecure belong to the second category. The current agricultural trade system puts the South into an impossible situation: OECD annual state payments to their national agricultural sectors exceed Sub-Saharan Africa's entire GDP. It is the combination of protecting domestic agriculture in the rich countries and putting up barriers against the imports from poor countries that has severe negative impacts on agricultural/economic development in the South. In the South, where agriculture is frequently the most important sector, agriculture is often discriminated

against through taxation, liberalised cheap imports and/or marketing orders, favouring urban interests over rural ones. Both international and national trade policies often go against the rural poor.

**Commitment 5.**

***we will endeavour to prevent and be prepared for natural disasters and man-made emergencies and to meet transitory and emergency food requirements in ways that encourage recovery, rehabilitation, development and a capacity to satisfy future needs;***

**Reality:**

Food aid often exacerbates the market situation in Southern markets because food aid is being given when prices are low – to stabilise domestic markets in rich countries not when it’s needed and prices are high. This often has an extremely destructive effect on agricultural production in the South.

“Dumping foodstuffs at prices below production costs may benefit low-income consumers but it can also undermine production incentives, thus inflicting lasting damage on the food-crop agriculture of developing countries and contributing to rural impoverishment”<sup>12</sup>

**Commitment 6.**

**we will promote optimal allocation and use of public and private investments to foster human resources, sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems, and rural development, in high and low potential areas;**

**Reality**

**Debt servicing continues to dwarf total aid delivered to the poorest countries**

<b>Debt Service vs Aid, figures for 1999, millions of US\$</b>			
Country	Debt Service paid	Aid	Debt Service as a percentage of Aid received
Angola	1144	261	438
Bolivia	494	206	240
Cameroon	549	190	289
Cote d'Ivoire	1449	366	396
Gambia, The	21	14	156
Ghana	524	255	205
Guyana	105	29	362
Honduras	366	298	123
Kenya	716	195	367
Myanmar	97	29	330
Vietnam	1410	257	548
Yemen, Rep.	157	157	100
Zambia	439	347	126

*Global Development Finance 2001, World Bank*



## *Commitment 7.*

*we will implement, monitor, and follow-up this Plan of Action at all levels in co-operation with the international community.*

### **Reality:**

“This Lack of attention to addressing food insecurity as a specific issue has been very evident in the international arena since the World Food Summit. It is thus only rarely that food insecurity has been singled out for specific action by the influential G-7/8 and G-77 Summits and other major international meetings including those of the G15 and the non-aligned movement.

The same neglect of hunger reduction as a central element in poverty reduction is evident in the International Development Goals (IDGs) established by the World Bank, IMF UN and OECD, which exclude the World Food Summit target for hunger reduction as a specific and monitorable objective of development....”<sup>13</sup>

It is a disturbing reality today that governments and international organisations are withdrawing from a public role in agricultural research and the promotion of sustainable agriculture, pretending that this role could be taken on by the private sector. A recent example was the Human Development Report, published annually by the United Nations Development Programme. Going far beyond the report’s actual contents, the UNDP Administrator, Mr. Malloch Brown praised technology in general and biotechnology in particular as the solution to the hunger problem. While his techno-enthusiasm could be interpreted as him being detached from the realities of development co-operation, there is a strong reason to be concerned when the UNDP says it sees the future of development in “partnerships” between development country governments and the private sector.

Delegating responsibility for the future of agriculture away from international development organisations and the public sector to big agribusiness companies is not only a sign of current economic thinking but also a sign of the fading importance of development co-operation and publicly funded international agricultural research in general.

## Greenpeace demands:

**Food is more than a commodity – it is a basic human right.** This must be reflected in the policies of governments (North and South), international organisations and the private sector. The 1996 „Plan of Action“ was a modest start, but real progress will only be achieved, if the poor are enabled to feed themselves.

**The large number of successful models for sustainable agriculture must be applied globally.** Rather than pushing the agenda of a handful of agribusiness giants Greenpeace demands that these models of sustainable agriculture be applied, further developed and refined in a truly participatory fashion for the immediate benefit of farmers and the livelihoods of the rural poor.

**International organisations like the UNDP must reconsider their controversial techno-enthusiasm in agriculture.** Rather than focusing on theoretical ‘potential benefits’ of Genetic engineering that are far away from materialising, international organisations must stop ignoring the ecological risks involved with such technologies and redirect their attention towards the immediate direct needs of the poor (the people that supposedly justify the UNDP’s existence).

**The basic human right of food for all must take precedence over trade agreements.** Food sovereignty must rank above WTO rules and procedures.

**The “true costs” of food production (including the environmental costs and benefits not reflected in prices) have to be the basis for structuring incentives in agriculture policies:** so far, neither the environmentally beneficial aspects of ecologically sound agriculture nor the destructive effects of conventional farming are being adequately addressed by agricultural policy and the incentive structures it creates.

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## References

<sup>1</sup> FAO Committee on World Food Security (2001) Twenty –seventh Session: Fostering the Political Will to Fight Hunger. Rome 28 May – 1 June 2001.

<sup>2</sup> FAO (2000) The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2000

<sup>3</sup> FAO (2000) op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> FAO (2000) op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> FAO (2000) op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> FAO (2000) op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> FAO 1996

<sup>8</sup> WRI/IFPRI (2000) Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE) Agro-ecosystems 2000/01

<sup>9</sup> WRI/IFPRI (2000) op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> WRI/IFPRI (2000) op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> WRI/IFPRI (2000) op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> FAO (2001) op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> FAO (2001) op. cit.