

Opening of Policies against Hunger Conference, Berlin 27 June 2023
by Cem Özdemir, Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

Minister of State [Dr Tobias] **Lindner**,

State Secretary [Jochen] **Flasbarth**,

Your Excellency Mr [Gabriel] **Ferrero y de Loma-Osario**,
(Chair of the CFS, Chair of the conference)

Mr [Michael] **Fakhri**,
(UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food)

Ms [Beth] **Bechdol**,
(Deputy Director-General of the FAO)

Dr [Martin] **Frick**,
(World Food Programme, Director Global Office Berlin)

Ms [Elisabetta] **Recine**,
(President of the Brazilian National Food and Nutrition Security Council)

Mr [Michael] **Windfuhr**,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

+++ I. Introduction +++

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Weltsaal of the Federal Foreign Office, the venue of our “Policies against Hunger” conference, which will be focussing on one particular issue this year:

How can we successfully shape the long-term transformation of our food systems while placing a clear focus on respect for human rights?

- Realising the human right to adequate food takes top priority on my political agenda.
- And there is good reason for that.
- The access to adequate food and nutrition is a key prerequisite for leading a self-determined life in dignity all around the globe.
- Leading a self-determined life in dignity – what is a matter of course for us here in Europe, is still far beyond reach for many people in many regions of the world.
- Because one human in ten on our globe is suffering from hunger.
- Approximately one third of the world population does not have reliable and safe access to adequate and sufficient food.
- According to figures provided by the United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR, there are currently around 110 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes.
- And all of these statistical figures are rising.
- This is unbearable!
- We cannot and will not accept this!
- People in regions where the climate crisis is hitting with full force are already suffering most from hunger.
- And, unnecessarily, the situation is being further exacerbated by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

+++ *II. Commitment to the right to food* +++

The answer to the urgent question of how to realise the human right to adequate food in view of this dramatic situation must be two-fold – we need both a short-term and a long-term response.

- The short-term response is obvious:
- providing humanitarian assistance wherever this is possible – both to save human lives and to stabilise the affected regions.
- It is crucial that we do not falter in our efforts – because with humanitarian assistance, we can ease the suffering of people in greatest need in many parts of the world and, above all: we can save human lives!
- However, short-term assistance and money alone will not eliminate hunger and malnutrition on a lasting basis.

To reach this goal, we need to fundamentally transform our agri-food systems to bring about long-term effects.

- Yet only if we take into account human rights-based approaches, will we be able to successfully implement this transformation.

- This means that we must always respect the individual right to a self-determined life in dignity, equal participation in society and good governance.
- More specifically, we must place a greater focus than before on the situation of particularly vulnerable people and groups.
- Here, I am primarily referring to the situation of women, young people, indigenous communities and smallholder farmers.
- Because on the one hand, they are especially affected by the consequences of the multiple crises we are facing.
- On the other hand, they could be part of the solution, provided that they are granted fair access to land, financial means and raw materials, for instance.
- And provided that we listen to them and get them involved in relevant processes.
- To underline this aim, I have established a new division on the right to food in my ministry.
- Thus, in future, the right to adequate food will be playing a prominent role in my ministry's work.

As early as 2004, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture –at that time headed by Agriculture Minister Renate Künast –

participated in drawing up the “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food”.

- Since then, we have been strongly advocating for the implementation of these guidelines in the different processes at national and international level.
- I am glad that with this year’s Policies against Hunger conference, we very deliberately put human rights-based approaches at the centre of political debates.
- And that with Michael Fakhri and Michael Windfuhr, we have succeeded in winning the support of two outspoken advocates of the right to food for this conference.
- My sincerest thanks and a warm welcome to you!
- And last but not least: Elisabetta Recine, President of the Brazilian National Food and Nutrition Security Council.
- We met quite recently in Brazil and I was highly impressed by her work.
- I hope that we will be able to learn a lot from you today and tomorrow, dear Elisabetta!
- My appeal to all of us is clear: let us listen to her carefully!

+++ III. Concluding remarks +++

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the course of the next two days, you will jointly discuss possible ways of realising the human right to adequate food and develop concrete recommendations.

- I would like to thank you very much in advance for this.
- The outcomes of today's conference will contribute to the international efforts for transforming our food systems.

They will form the basis for further activities conducted within the scope of

- the UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment that will take place in Rome in July,
- the High-Level SDG Summit in New York,
- the Committee on World Food Security of the United Nations – the CFS –,
- and, of course, also for the work carried out at national level.

+++ The fight against hunger is no single-player tournament

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I am convinced that we are all well aware of one thing: the fight against hunger is no single-player tournament. It can only be successful if we work together.

- For this reason, it is important that we all join forces.
- We are setting a good example today: I am very pleased that the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Foreign Office are also represented here.
- However, first of all, we want to get non-governmental, civil society stakeholders more involved in the process – both at national and international level.
- And, today and tomorrow, we want to give the floor to people who belong to vulnerable groups or act as their spokespersons.
- People who will tell us about their experiences in their countries of origin.
- I am particularly keen to hear your reports, they can really make a difference!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We also see today's conference as a prelude to the forthcoming 20th anniversary of the "Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food", which we will celebrate next year.
- This important milestone on the way towards realising the right to food is to be attributed to the work of the CFS.
- The CFS has been, and still is, one of the driving forces behind the guidelines.
- We are therefore delighted that Gabriel Ferrero y de Loma-Osario, the CFS Chair, is taking the chair of this conference. Thank you very much for that!
- My ministry encourages the efforts to further strengthen the CFS – despite all opposition and regardless of any signs of fatigue!
- Because the Committee is an indispensable part of the global governance needed to transform our food systems.
- It is the most important multilateral platform that allows all stakeholders concerned to voice their opinions.
- It is an essential driver of human rights-based approaches.
- I am convinced that this conference will send a clear signal in this regard.

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I wish us all every success for today and tomorrow and I am grateful for your participation and your commitment to realising the human right to food– thank you very much!