

Good intentions

The Cairo Declaration of the World Food Council 15th Ministerial Session

1. We, the Ministers and plenipotentiaries of the World Food Council, met at Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, for the fifteenth session, from 22 to 25 May 1989, under the presidency of Mr Eduardo Pesqueira of Mexico. We deliberated on the implementation of the Cyprus Initiative Against Hunger in the World, which we had adopted at our fourteenth session at Nicosia, a year after our Beijing Declaration. Our discussions were based on the President's comprehensive report, prepared with the assistance of an *ad hoc* consultative group of Council members. The report comprised a review of global hunger 15 years after the World Food Conference, an assessment of the effectiveness of current policies and programmes in reducing hunger and, most importantly, the proposed Programme of Cooperative Action. Our deliberations focused on urgently needed action.

2. Our discussions were not free of some frustration and impatience with an international community that has not yet succeeded in turning its energies sufficiently towards a problem that morally must be solved and practically can be solved. Yet hunger continues to grow, because we have not tried hard enough to eradicate it, even though we have the resources to do so.

3. Peace is a prerequisite for sound development, which should have the well-being of all people as its central objective. We are encouraged by recent achievements towards peace and disarmament, and are optimistic that long-held hopes for diverting savings from military expenditure to development may finally become a reality.

Hunger 15 years after the World Food Conference

4. The world is now feeding more people than at the time of the World Food Conference. Despite this, hunger and malnutrition are growing, and will continue to grow unless nations, individually and collectively, take more effective action in favour of the hungry poor.

5. The tragedy of hunger has many faces: the starvation caused by famine, often associated with violent conflict or war, and natural disasters; the silent suffering of the growing number of undernourished; the millions of malnourished children, women and elderly who are unable to meet their special food and health needs; and the many lives lost to or ruined by disorders caused by deficiencies of micro-nutrients, such as vitamin A and iodine.

6. Hunger is concentrated in the rural areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it exists everywhere, including in the more advanced countries of the developing world and in many developed countries. While different forms of hunger have specific

causes requiring appropriate responses, they are generally rooted in poverty and a failure to share food and wealth adequately within and between countries.

7. This failure to share the world's food resources was most tragically demonstrated earlier in the present decade, when the growth in the number of hungry people accelerated, despite record-level global food stocks. Although these stocks have been sharply reduced recently, it is a fact of our times that hunger can no longer be blamed on inadequate food supplies globally. Locally and regionally, food shortages do occur, as is shown by the fact that food availability per person has declined from already low levels in many developing countries in the 1980s.

8. The problems of access to food by those who need it have been made worse by the economic difficulties of the 1980s. Stagnating or falling incomes in many developing countries, net resource transfers of those countries to the outside world, the burden of debt and the effects of some structural adjustment programmes have slowed economic activity in developing economies. When economic activity slows down, the poor suffer most, but when the level of economic activity increases, they often benefit the least. Economic activity – and food production is an important element of that – provides the means for making the elimination of hunger and malnutrition possible, but is by itself insufficient without policies and programmes that direct its benefits to the poor.

Policies and programmes to eradicate hunger and malnutrition

9. To ensure that hunger and poverty are reduced as a result of economic activity, their elimination must be made a central objective of national policies. Supportive policy changes emphasizing social and cultural policies, economic reforms, employment, judicious population policies and comprehensive food strategies are essential. Integrated food strategies aim at achieving the sustainable reduction of hunger and malnutrition and increased food self-reliance. Employment and income generation and the active involvement of the hungry poor – the small farmers, the landless and the urban poor – are critical elements for the success of such strategies. Women, as nurturers, guardians of family health and food producers and entrepreneurs, have a particular role to play. They merit sustained and increased support. Poor and disadvantaged groups must become effective partners in the development process.

10. To increase food production, food strategies will emphasize domestic research and extension, the timely provision of inputs at prices farmers can afford and appropriate production incentives. Maintaining a balance between the public and private sectors in foodgrain production, storage and marketing may be useful. The private sector can play an important role in unleashing the energies and creativity of people to improve personal and national income; however, this does not guarantee adequate food and well-being for all people. Human resource development and rural infrastructure and institutions are critical elements of such strategies. Agrarian reforms can provide an important means for more equitable distribution of assets and incomes. Effective food, nutrition and health programmes targeted to vulnerable groups are an important complement to these measures.

11. At the fourteenth session, held at Nicosia, we emphasized the importance of ecologically sustainable agricultural practices and identified specific actions in this field. We will follow up on these as part of our efforts to be undertaken in the context of the Cyprus Initiative.

12. An improved international economic environment is necessary for the growth of the economies of the developing countries, and will contribute to the elimination of hunger through generating economic activity, provided that domestic policies are in place to direct part of its benefits to the poor. It is necessary to increase resource flows to the developing countries and solve the problems of foreign debt. While we appreciate the efforts that are already being made by developed countries to ease the developing countries' debt burden, much more could be done. We recommend that resources freed through relief of developing-country foreign debt be invested by developing countries in food-security programmes.

13. As part of their efforts to cope with their debt problems and related economic difficulties, many developing countries are undertaking economic adjustment programmes. While it is too early in most cases to judge the longer-term impact of these programmes, it is clear that they have seriously hurt lower-income populations. The Council encourages a greater sensitivity by multilateral financial institutions, international agencies and the international community in general to the need for changes in current approaches to adjustment. We urge that these organizations, by means of coordination and the adequate use of respective expertise, help the countries to prevent and overcome the negative effects of adjustment. We emphasize the importance of not only protecting the levels of food security and well-being of low-income groups during the adjustment process, but also explicitly incorporating into the design of structural adjustment programmes long-term objectives for food security and poverty alleviation.

14. We urge developed countries to increase official development assistance flows, and to improve the effectiveness of bilateral and multilateral development aid, by means of a sharper and better coordinated focus on the needs of the poorest. We attach great importance to the increased integration of non-governmental organizations into development assistance in the reduction of hunger and poverty. We urge these organizations to intensify their efforts in this respect.

15. In this regard, the Council was very pleased with the work of IFAD in fighting poverty. It requests countries that have not already done so announce their pledges to the third replenishment of IFAD, commensurate with their possibility to do so, as a matter of urgency so as to achieve the funding objective of US\$750 million.

16. We underline the importance that all countries be committed to the achievement of a positive result of the multilateral trade negotiations undertaken within the framework of the GATT Uruguay Round. These negotiations provide perhaps the last opportunity of this century to halt and reverse growing protectionism. We welcome the progress achieved by the Trade Negotiations Committee at its meeting at Geneva in April 1989 in elaborating and endorsing a framework for further negotiations on agricultural trade. In this connection, it was also agreed that issues related to food security should be taken into account in the course of the negotiations. These developments now open the way to implementation of a package of concessions in trade of tropical products, put on hold at the mid-term review in December 1988. In this

context, we also discussed the importance of expanding trade among the developing countries themselves.

A call to action

17. As the Council has stressed at earlier sessions, hunger is largely a man-made phenomenon: human error or neglect creates it, human complacency perpetuates it and human resolve can eradicate it. We, the members of the Council, can serve as an example for the rest of the world, if we demonstrate this human resolve by strengthening our own political determination to eradicate hunger, commensurate with the magnitude and urgency of the problem.

18. Clearly, each country must take initiatives of its own in the fight against hunger and poverty, but achievements will be greatest when we, members as well as non-members of the Council, work together and coordinate our efforts. In this spirit, we accept the following steps articulated in the Programme of Cooperative Action proposed by the Council's President, as a framework for our individual and collective actions to combat hunger. In this regard, we should:

- (a) review our policies and programmes to provide food security for all people, and devise a package of corrective measures to address inadequacies, reporting on progress to WFC at its sixteenth session;
- (b) make all efforts to achieve, during the next decade, the elimination of starvation and death caused by famine; a substantial reduction of malnutrition and mortality among young children; a tangible reduction in chronic hunger; and the elimination of major nutritional deficiency diseases;
- (c) adopt, evaluate and improve food strategies, as an important instrument to fight hunger within broader development efforts focused on the improvement of the human condition;
- (d) cooperate among each other, and with other countries, in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

19. As a step towards the elimination of starvation from famine, we accept, in principle, the proposal for an international agreement on the safe passage of emergency food aid to those in need and support, in particular, practical measures that could be taken to protect the most vulnerable groups from the effects of civil strife, war and natural disasters.

20. In this connection, it is important that donor countries continue to streamline their administrative procedures in order to make their responses to emergency requests more timely and flexible. We also believe that it might be appropriate to consider the possibility of an international agreement that pledges recipient countries and countries through which food aid transits to take action to hold down the cost of port and handling fees, demurrage and internal transport. We call on WFP for further action.

21. We welcome the follow-up by the WFC secretariat regarding the promotion of training programmes in food policy management and support of food strategies in Africa at the national and regional levels. We call on African countries to implement the proposals presented at the WFC/AfDB consultation with African countries and urge the bilateral and multilateral organizations to support these efforts by strengthening their assistance to African training institutions.

22. We support the activities undertaken by the secretariat to further South–South cooperation on food and agriculture at the regional and interregional levels, in close cooperation with concerned United Nations agencies, covering the areas of food production, promotion of interregional trade, agro-industries and the development of institutional and management capacities. Specifically, we call on UNDP to adopt the umbrella project for the promotion of regional and South–South cooperation in the food and agriculture sector, which was prepared in close cooperation with WFC, for implementation by concerned United Nations agencies.

23. The level of political support for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition must be raised, both nationally and internationally. At the international level, hunger and poverty elimination should be a major theme on the agenda of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on international economic cooperation to be held in April 1990 and a central objective for the international development strategy for the 1990s. The President of the Council is requested to convey these conclusions and recommendations to the seven industrialized countries prior to the Paris summit in July 1989.

24. We emphasize that our agreements at this session are only the first step towards implementing the Cyprus Initiative. We request the secretariat to present to the Council at its sixteenth session a progress report on the recommendations made above, including further proposals for the implementation of elements of the Programme of Cooperative Action, especially in those areas identified in our deliberations at this session.

25. We agree to refer to these conclusions and recommendations as the Cairo Declaration.

The Bangkok Affirmation

We, the Task Force for Child Survival, meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on Protecting the World's Children: A Call for Action, 1–3 March 1990,

(1) *recognize* the remarkable health progress which has been achieved in developing countries during the past decade in reducing under-5 childhood mortality, especially through immunization and the application of oral rehydration therapy;

(2) *urge* that accelerated efforts be continued so that world immunization coverage levels for children will reach at least 80% by the end of 1990;

(3) *recognize* that the success of immunization and diarrhoeal disease control can and should be expanded to include a number of other feasible priority health and development programmes;

(4) *affirm* that, in support of national health aspirations, collaboration by the international community, including United Nations agencies, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and non-governmental organizations, provides the best potential for success of individual health initiatives and the best means of further strengthening national health capacities;

- Collaboration within countries must be under the leadership and responsibility of national governments if it is to be effective.

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(5) *urge* national leaders and the international community to:

- *underline* the importance of education and communication in the development process and the particular importance of support from the educational and communication sectors in achieving the above health goals;
- *accord* high priority to the dissemination of the information contained in *Facts for Life*, using educational systems as major modes of effective communication for teachers, pupils and parents;
- *recognize* the need for improved social and health status of women in their own right and their impact on the health and well-being of their children;
- *recognize* the centrality of health for development, peace and security and the need to broaden the definition of security itself beyond the realm of defence to include the protection of health, including the protection of food availability and the protection of the environment;
- *affirm* the desirability and feasibility of the WHO/Unicef Common Goals for the Health of Women and Children by the year 2000:

Reduction of mortality

Reduction by 50% from 1990 levels of maternal mortality rates.

Reduction of 1990 infant mortality rates by one-third or to 50 per 1000 live births, whichever is the greater reduction.

Reduction of 1990 under-5 mortality rates by one-third or to 70 per 1000 live births, whichever is the greater reduction.

Women's education and health

Universal access to basic education and achievement of primary education by at least 80% of primary-school-age children.

Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to at least half its 1990 level with emphasis on female literacy.

Special attention to the health and nutrition of the female child and pregnant and lactating women.

Access by all couples to information and services to prevent pregnancies which are too early, too closely spaced, too late or too many.

Access by all pregnant women to prenatal care, trained attendants during childbirth and referral facilities for high-risk pregnancies and obstetric emergencies.

Better nutrition

Reduction of the rate of low birth weight (2.5 kg) to less than 10%.

Empowerment of all women to exclusively breastfeed their children for the first four to six months of life and to continue breastfeeding with complementary food well into the second year.

Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by one-half of 1990 levels.

Virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders.

Virtual elimination of vitamin A deficiency and its consequences, including blindness.

Reduction of iron deficiency anaemia in women by one-third of 1990 levels.

Control of childhood diseases

Global eradication of poliomyelitis.

Elimination of neonatal tetanus by 1995.

Reduction by 95% of measles deaths and reduction by 90% of measles cases compared to pre-immunization levels by 1995, as a major step towards the global eradication of measles in the longer term.

Reduction of 50%, compared to 1990 levels, of deaths due to diarrhoea in children under 5 years; and 25% reduction of the diarrhoea incidence rate compared to 1990.

Reduction by one-third, compared with 1990 levels, of deaths due to acute respiratory infections in children under 5 years.

Control of the environment

Universal access to safe water.

Universal access to sanitary means of excreta disposal.

Elimination of guinea-worm disease (dracunculiasis).

Achievement of a safer and more sanitary environment with significant reduction of disease vectors, radioactive, chemical, microbiological and other pollutants.

- *accept* this comprehensive array of relevant, largely feasible although ambitious, goals as a useful guideline for setting goals at national level and for international debate, notwithstanding the priority for a number of countries of other goals, such as the reduction in morbidity and disability, the reduction of neonatal mortality and the control of malaria and AIDS.
- *pledge* themselves to work together in support of these goals collaborating with other governments and agencies in pursuit of these and additional health and development goals relevant at government, agency, community or individual level.

The Bellagio Declaration: overcoming hunger in the 1990s

It is possible to end half the world's hunger before the year 2000. We have only imprecise numbers to take measure of the hungry, but those numbers tell us that: (1) a billion people live in households too poor to obtain the food they need for work; (2) half of those are too poor even to obtain the food they need to maintain minimal activity; (3) one child in six is born underweight and one in three is underweight by age 5; and (4) hundreds of millions of people suffer anaemia, goitre, and impaired sight from diets with too little iron, iodine or vitamin A. In a world of potential food plenty, we have collectively failed more than 1 billion of our people.

Hunger wears many faces. It may be acute or chronic, visible or hidden, food or disease related, but it is typically rooted in poverty and in the economic and social processes that perpetuate it. The elimination of hunger, therefore, is a formidable and long-term undertaking. Recognizing this, we still believe that reducing hunger by half in the 1990s is a realistic objective for the world. We can act meaningfully to end hunger in the short run without losing sight of the continuing need in the long run to address its basic causes.

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when efforts to overcome hunger have been grossly inadequate in the face of deteriorating economic conditions in Africa and Latin America, persistent hunger in South Asia and increased incidences of hunger in wealthy countries. Overall, the 1980s have been a period of growing realization that most development efforts have failed the hungry and poor in the Third World and that current uses of natural resources are unsustainable. Less visible but more encouraging trends in the 80s include a fresh understanding of the origins and causes of hunger, lessons learned from recent attempts to improve nutrition, the evolution of a worldwide logistical system to provide emergency food aid, rapid progress against childhood and nutritional diseases, and the maturation of grassroots movements and development groups.

As we turn into the 1990s the world is in great ferment. Fears of imminent worldwide economic collapse have abated. Peace and efforts for peace are emerging in all regions of the world. In many countries, both industrialized and developing, a wave of democratization, participation and pluralism is evident. On the other hand, unequal trade relations between the North and the South, growing and already heavy debt burdens, environmental degradation and continued rapid population growth make life miserable and particularly difficult for poor people in Third World countries.

It is against this background of new opportunity and persistent problems that organizations – governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental – concerned with hunger have begun to identify needed directions for the 1990s and to propose new initiatives for public action. Specifically, the Bellagio Declaration proposes four achievable goals for the 1990s.

Achievable goals

We believe that it is possible and imperative in the 1990s (1) to eliminate deaths from famine, (2) to end hunger in half of the poorest households, (3) to cut malnutrition in half for mothers and small children, and (4) to eradicate iodine and vitamin A deficiencies. Together, these goals comprise a comprehensive yet still practical programme that can end half of world hunger in the 1990s.

These goals are achievable because they build on the best experiences with programmes and policies for overcoming world hunger. The most promising ones are those that empower people to assess their own condition and to act in their own behalf, that provide short-term hunger relief while addressing deeply rooted causes, and that can be sustained over the long term.

1. Eliminate famine deaths

An attainable target by the year 2000 is the virtual elimination, through improvement of early warning and response systems and international efforts to provide safe passage of food in zones of armed conflict, of deaths due to famine among the 15–35 million people at risk of famine in any year.

Many of the tools needed to prevent deaths due to famine are already in place. Efforts to cope with drought, flood, war and famine in the 1980s have led to major improvements in the global system for providing emergency food aid. Some developing countries have created early-response mechanisms to take advantage of early warnings. Con-

tinued effort must be made to improve these programmes by taking into account local indicators of increased vulnerability among groups at particular risk.

Another achievement growing out of experience with the famines of the 1980s is the widespread awareness of the need for relating short-term relief measures to longer-term development objectives. Although emergency food aid often is the most critical intervention, agencies and organizations engaged in famine relief now know that they need to couple it with measures to reduce dependency on such aid and to promote self-reliance.

The major obstacle to eliminating famine remains the destruction or interdiction of civilian food supplies in zones of armed conflict. The rudiments for international protection of civilian rights to food exist in international law, most specifically in the 1977 protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 that prohibit starvation of civilians as a means of combat. More recently, there is renewed interest in an international or regional covenant for the sanctity of civilian food supplies and the safe passage of emergency food relief. Such a covenant could bind nations to provide safe passage and might permit convoy by United Nations peacekeeping forces within their national territory.

2. End hunger in one-half of the poorest households

Also attainable is the goal of augmenting purchasing power and food production levels so as to enable half the hungry people in the world to buy or grow enough to eat.

For many poor farmers in the Third World a key need is maintaining access to the natural resource base and the inputs needed for cultivating, herding or fishing in the face of growing population and increased competition for land. Increasingly, poor households have had to cope with the deterioration of their resources, the loss of crucial access to common resources and restriction to all but the most ecologically marginal land. The task of rehabilitating degraded ecosystems and restoring to the most vulnerable groups their access and control of productive resources of land, forest and water must be accelerated. A variety of sustainable agricultural and forestry techniques with demonstrated ability to sustain productivity, provide fuelwood, limit soil erosion and increase food and income can also be applied.

Measures to increase small-farm agricultural production and to create new income and work activities could end hunger for a third to a half of the roughly 450 million people who now live in rural households too poor to minimally feed themselves. Programmes that provide wage and food income in return for labour to construct needed agricultural infrastructure and to restore degraded resources show particular promise. They reduce poverty in the short run through direct supplementation of incomes and in the long run through sustained increases in agricultural productivity and income. Programmes that have provided self-sustaining sources of credit, especially for women, to start small businesses or produce local products and services have also proven quite effective in many countries.

Food-security programmes, given targeting and effective application, could by the end of the decade end hunger for half or more of the 150 million people in urban households too poor to minimally feed themselves in present circumstances. There is widespread agreement that untargeted food assistance, carried out by means of price control,

overvalued exchange rates, import controls or cash subsidies, is ineffective or cannot be sustained because of its high costs. Yet ample experience with food-security programmes demonstrates that careful targeting can be accomplished by subsidizing foods that are consumed primarily by the poor and by distributing food and coupons in poor neighbourhoods and to vulnerable groups such as mothers and children. The use of existing marketing networks to distribute food can often lower costs and improve participation. Community-organized mass feeding programmes are also effective, low-cost ways to target and distribute food.

3. Cut malnutrition among women and children in half

Women of reproductive age and children under 5 years of age are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. Although many of the measures listed above will help improve their situation in the decade to come, special measures are still needed to reduce their special vulnerabilities. Sustained breastfeeding, expanded supplemental feeding and growth monitoring, in combination with limiting the effects of childhood illnesses, could reduce by half the common forms of childhood wasting and stunting. The prevalence of breastfeeding is stable or even increasing in many developing countries, perhaps assisted by continuing efforts to encourage and maintain it. Innovative programmes that combine monitoring of child growth through regular weighing to detect wasting with supplementary feeding hold promise to address the weight loss of children with recurrent bouts of illness and the difficult weaning transition from breast to the adult diet.

Many such initiatives for the benefit of children place an increased burden on already overworked mothers, even though they may be somewhat compensated by the reduced care required by healthy children. Community-based programmes that include childcare and other supports can lessen this burden while enhancing mothers' efforts. Reducing by at least half through iron supplements the nutritional anaemia endemic in women of reproductive age can further strengthen mothers. Continued promotion of improved birth spacing will benefit both children and mothers.

4. Eradicate iodine and vitamin A deficiencies

Through the use of current techniques, most of the 190 million cases of goitre could be eradicated and the 280 million children at risk of vitamin A deficiency protected by the end of the century. Selected regions and countries have made major progress in eliminating iodine deficiency disorders – marked by goitre, mental impairment and, in the extreme, cretinism – and the visual impairment of vitamin A deficiency diseases. For goitre, most countries can provide iodized salt to most areas endemic with the disease and injections of iodized oil for inhabitants of more remote mountain and desert regions. For vitamin A deficiency, a capsule taken two or three times a year can protect a child throughout the critical ages of 1–4 years. Evidence is also increasing for wide-ranging health benefits beyond eye protection from vitamin A therapy.

Strategies and resources

Any strategy to overcome hunger in the 1990s must be conceived and implemented in full awareness of the array of fundamental changes and

trends that will characterize the coming decade and shape the context in which hunger persists. Indeed, if we fail to relate efforts to end hunger to these broader forces – which represent both obstacles and opportunities – short-term gains may well be swamped by long-term increases in hunger.

The outstanding situation that must be recognized as we move into the 1990s is the inequitable economic relationship between the North and the South, which withdraws net capital from the South, diverts agriculture in developing countries from producing food to meet local needs, creates contentious food-trade barriers, underprices food commodities and often encourages capital investment that undermines rather than advances sustainable uses of agriculture and resources.

No less challenging than the worldwide economic picture is the precarious state of the global environment. Deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, water shortage and salinization, chemical contamination and global warming will adversely affect the sustainable food production capacity of the planet. But embedded in this threat is also an opportunity. Worldwide attention, from heads of state to the general public, is now strongly focused on the endangered planet. We who combat hunger must put a human face on the environmental issue: unless we restore and maintain viable ecosystems and ecological cycles, we will increasingly threaten our ability to feed humanity. Opponents of hunger must embrace their environmentalist allies in a common cause.

Exacerbating the environment/hunger problem is the continued growth of the world's population. During the 1990s the world will need to feed another billion mouths, most living in the very countries where the ability to curb hunger is already severely strained. Family planning programmes that have slowed the overall rate of population growth in the world must persist and expand with international support to reduce the vulnerability of the poor to hunger and famine.

A particularly welcome evolution has been the rapid chain of events in Eastern Europe and the USSR. This has reduced tension between the East and the West and opens up new opportunities for trade and investments. These opportunities for cooperation on a global scale should be used to strengthen North-South cooperation, rather than diverting the already diminishing flow of resources from the poor and hungry of the South. For instance, a social compact might be agreed upon whereby funds that become available through reduction of East-West arms expenditures would be used to assist both Eastern Europe and the South.

From the perspective of these anticipated global trends, what then are the strategies to overcome hunger that will be most effective?

Particularly important is the creation of new opportunities for the hungry themselves, together with their leaders, advocates, mass movements and local organizations and resources. In this context it is especially important to empower women, who grow most of the Third World's food and feed its families. More needs to be known about the full development potential of the wide range of non-governmental organizations, especially for the multiplication and aggregation of grassroots initiatives and the advocacy of needs and interests of people who normally find no ways of expressing their demands through formal government channels. But much more needs to be done even by well-intentioned governments and aid agencies to incorporate into their

modes of operation greater sensitivity to modes of participation that enable people to act on their own behalf.

Although many governments in developing countries are under severe financial pressure and often lack the capacity to implement extensive programmes, they must play a growing role in a renewed effort to combat hunger. Decisions to decentralize responsibility to lower echelons of administration and to local government institutions or to use the distributional capacity of the market that gained momentum in the 1980s must continue. Such local-level agencies can play a major role in developing and restoring necessary rural infrastructure and services. To make these investments worthwhile, however, governments must also take important steps towards the creation of an enabling environment in which citizens and their organizations can make more effective contributions to overcoming hunger.

Finally, an achievable reduction in hunger in the 1990s will require substantial new financial resources above and beyond the maintenance of current levels of donor and national support. The costs of the achievable goals range from a high of \$25 per person to provide famine relief or to build rural infrastructure through food-for-work programmes to 57¢ per person to provide the vitamin A and iodine supplementation needed to prevent blindness and goitre. Many of these costs are already partly met in current national and international expenditures. Thus a realistic programme to combat hunger in the 1990s might require US\$5–10 billion per year in new or reallocated funds.

The most common source proposed for additional resources is a substantial reduction in the annual military expenditures, currently nearly US\$1 trillion worldwide, as great power rivalry and conflict diminish and serious efforts are made to resolve regional disputes. A reduction of 1% in these annual expenditures could more than fund a comprehensive programme to overcome hunger in the 1990s. Additional food aid, if properly used, can not only meet emergency needs in extreme deficit situations, but when carefully marketed can provide new sources of funds for local initiatives. Other new sources of funds could include the 'swapping' of actions against hunger in exchange for outstanding debts, the redirection of existing development expenditures by identifying poor people rather than poor countries as the relevant target of interventions, and the linking of efforts to overcome hunger with those to improve health care, enhance poor people's access to productive resources and promote sustainable environmental development.

Although the objectives of the programme to end half the world's hunger before the year 2000 are global, strategic emphasis will differ between regions and countries. In sub-Saharan Africa priority may be given to strengthening early-response systems to famine, including exploration of an accord, sanctioned by the Organization of African Unity, on safe passage for relief supplies; targeted support for increased production by the poor, including efforts to control pests that significantly reduce harvests and stored food; and efforts to break the disease–undernutrition nexus. In Asia, where the food problem is often less a matter of production than redistribution, priority must be given to restoring and increasing access and control by the poor of necessary resources and to encouraging development strategies that are socially just and environmentally sustainable. In Latin America priority may be given to alleviating the disproportionate share of the debt burden that is

currently carried by wage earners and the self-employed in the informal sector; reforming food systems so that they better meet the needs of vulnerable groups of women, urban poor, indigenous populations and small-farm households; and improving the health and nutrition infrastructure to enable governments and other organizations to meet the targets for mothers and children and for the major nutritional deficiency diseases.

Call for action

An ambitious programme to attack hunger in the 1990s requires most of all the mobilization of public support for this cause both in developed and developing countries. In most of these, the hungry and the poor do not have natural allies in their governments. Their needs are considered and their voices heard only to the extent that they are mobilized into their own organizations or that their cause is adopted by others. The last decade has witnessed a slow emergence of new public voices for the hungry and impoverished in rich countries based in churches, development organizations and populist groups. Such groups have mobilized constituencies for the hungry, utilized the mass media and developed long-term relationships with governments wherever appropriate. In developing countries, opportunities for influence have been different. Mass media and lobbying efforts have been less important than efforts by religious and political organizations. These emerging voices need to be strengthened, particularly in countries where the voices of the hungry are faint.

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Faced with potentially competitive concerns, the call for ending hunger must be strengthened. But the clarity of the message needs to be strengthened as well, reminding constituencies of the enormity of the need, creating alternatives between the acceptance of hunger as always with us and the postponement of action until the world can be set fully right, and weighing in with promise on the fine balance between hope and despair. Pragmatic as well as altruistic arguments need to be used. The billion hungry people are effectively outside of markets for anything but the lowest-valued foodstuffs. It is in the long-term interests of economies that live by trade to help those households move beyond the threshold of hunger. By placing political leaders at all levels under constructive pressure to consider overcoming hunger as both an achievable goal and an inescapable concern of the 1990s, individuals and organizations can make a lasting contribution towards the emergence of a new political vision and a renewal of social energy to ensure places at the table for the hungry of the world.

For the first time in human history, the end of famine is achievable. The worst forms of hunger in both rural and urban areas can be halved. Most nations, even poor ones, could provide for the minimum nutritional needs of mothers and children. Goitre can be relegated to a glandular disorder of the few rather than the iodine-starvation of the many. Blindness can be prevented in the 42 million children with vitamin A deficiency. A focused attack on these four faces of hunger – drawing on new resources and combining the better and best of efforts that have worked well for the poor – can end half the world's hunger over the next decade.