



Human rights and right to food key for solving the global food crisis says Olivier De Schutter at forum on Right to Food , FAO 1-3 October.

The Right to Food Unit of FAO convened a Right to Food forum from 1st – 3rd October 2008 with the aim of reviewing achievements and drawing lessons learned from the experiences of key players in the field . The forum brought together representatives from governments, academic world, international organizations, NGOs and CSOs. Several country experiences were brought into discussion (Brazil, Guatemala, India, Mozambique, Philippines and Uganda).

With its recognition of the right to food as a fundamental human right, Brazil is today leading the way in the implementation of this right at national level.

Global campaigns promoting the right to food have taken place such as “HungerFree” by ActionAid; “Face-It-Act-Now” by FIAN; the “Campaña sobre el Derecho a la Alimentación” by PROSALUS; and the “The Right to Food: Make it Happen - World Food Day 2007” by FAO. A right to food curriculum has been developed and presents a compendium of lessons designed to provide actors with the needed knowledge, understanding and skills for the implementation of tasks related to the implementation of the right to Food.

In his closing remarks, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, recalled that, although not legally binding, the Right to Food Voluntary Guidelines - adopted by FAO’s Council in November 2004 – are a useful tool for governments: by choosing them as their guiding principle for public action, governments act more efficiently. “Trying to implement the right to food without the Right to Food Guidelines would be like trying to put a nail in the wall without using a hammer” said De Schutter.

Looking at the way ahead, the Special Rapporteur explained the relevance of new initiatives such as the *Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food*, proposed by France and approved by the G8 and the UN Secretary General. However De Schutter also warned about the potential dangers that would derive from trying to realize the right to food at national level only through agriculture. According to him this may indeed be a mistake due to the multidimensional nature of the right to food, which involves not just the agriculture sector but also the departments of health, education and social security.

As mentioned in his report submitted to the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on 8 September 2008, De Schutter suggested that the current global food crisis needs immediate actions in terms of governance issues in the food production and distribution system, strengthening farmers’ organizations, reinforcing bargaining power, promoting practices that allow small scale producers to be integrated in global supply chains, promoting less expensive inputs for agriculture in order to avoid excessive dependence. Concluding De Schutter suggested the need for governments to address the global food crisis through the instrument of human rights. Focusing solely on the level of prices and on the volume of production would indeed be a danger for global stability.

Note: All relevant documents of the Right to Food forum can be downloaded from the following website: http://www.fao.org/righttofood/rtf_forum/background_en.html

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