



Interview with Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Secretary General of the Committee on World Food Security

I. What is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), what are its main objectives and activities especially with regard to meeting internationally set goals related to hunger?

The CFS is a standing intergovernmental committee of the FAO council established to examine major problems and issues affecting the world food security situation as well as steps proposed or taken by Governments and relevant international organizations to resolve them. The CFS was established following the recommendation by the World Food Conference of 1974 to serve as a forum in the United Nations system for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security. This includes food production, sustainable use of the natural resource base for food security, nutrition, trade, physical and economic access to food and other food security related aspects. Over the years, CFS debates have contributed substantially to the global debate on food and nutrition security issues and provided major inputs and guidance to the World Food Summit and World Food Summit *five years later*. After the WFS the Committee was also tasked to monitor progress towards the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action which relates to internationally agreed goals on hunger reduction.

II. What are the linkages between the International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH) and the CFS?

The IAAH concept grew out of CFS debates. The June 2002 Declaration of the World Food Summit: *five years later* (WFS:*fyl*) called “on all parties (governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector) to reinforce their efforts so as to act as an international alliance against hunger to achieve the WFS targets no later than 2015.” The IAAH is considered as a vehicle that could become a useful mechanism to raise awareness and promote advocacy for improving global food security in favour of achieving the WFS target and the Millennium Development Goals. It is, therefore, natural that the Committee should be interested in IAAH actions and achievements. In accordance with the decision made at the Committee’s 29th Session (12-16 May 2003) the IAAH has, since its inception, reported regularly on its activities to the Committee on World Food Security.

III. This year’s CFS will focus on the theme ‘Impact of High Food Prices on World Food Security and Nutrition’. The issue will also be discussed during a multi-stakeholder Special Event designed to encourage dialogue on ‘Issues and Policy Responses. Why do you think it is relevant for National Alliances Against Hunger to participate in this debate including in their countries?’

This year's theme was chosen for obvious reasons. Soaring food prices, especially in the last two years, have plunged an additional 75 million people below the hunger threshold bringing the estimated number of undernourished people worldwide to 923 million in 2007. Dealing with high food prices and their effects on hunger is considered a global problem which demands global, coordinated and coherent action. The responsibility of designing and implementing ways to improve this unacceptable situation rests with governments, NGOs/CSOs, private sector, academia, development agencies and individuals alike. National Alliances Against Hunger, as multi-stakeholder entities which include all these stakeholders, could contribute significantly to such efforts at national level. They could also, via the IAAH, convey proven best practices to other countries for possible replication. National Alliances Against Hunger could thus be key players in the collective battle against food insecurity and poverty.

IV. Proposals regarding the participation of Civil Society in the CFS will be submitted to Member Countries for discussion. Please tell us what is the essence of this proposal?

The proposals should be seen within the context of improving multi-stakeholder dialogue towards better food security as intimated in my previous response. They represent a balanced package of complementary actions to be introduced progressively at different levels in order to enhance FAO and CFS engagement with civil society with a view to improving food security. What is important is that progress is made in strengthening civil society engagement with governments and with the CFS towards reducing hunger and poverty.

V. For the first time the CFS and World Food Day will be held during the same week at FAO headquarters? How did this come about?

This arrangement follows a recommendation by the Committee during its last meeting held from 7-10 May 2007. It was considered that holding CFS and WFD in the same week may generate synergies between the two events such as encouraging higher level participation in both. Whether this arrangement will be repeated will depend on its outcome as well as other considerations related to the future of CFS including its duration and timing, which will be discussed during the October Session of the Committee.