HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HOLDS INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS ON RIGHT TO FOOD AND ON ADEQUATE HOUSING

8 March 2011

The Human Rights Council at a midday meeting held an interactive dialogue with Olivier de Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, and Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as component of right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

Mr. de Schutter said the world had entered in the new era of weather shocks and food prices would still change under the influence of climate change. The question now was how to enable countries to feed themselves. Old recipes were no longer valid and the world must find the way forward for agro ecology, whereby agriculture was done in sync with nature. Agriculture in this approach was seen as a cycle, where waste was used to fertilize the soil. Agro ecology had numerous advantages over industrial agriculture. Apart from the ability to increase yields spectacularly, it was a solution to rural poverty. It meant that rural households could produce more at lower costs, without the risk to enter the vicious cycle of debt. Agro ecology was the best possible response to climate change. Agro ecology provided definitive nutritional advantages to communities that practiced it. However, agro ecology would not emerge spontaneously only because it offered numerous advantages. Governments had the responsibility to prepare the transition to agro ecology and enable access for poor farmers.

Ms. Rolnik said she believed that her main contribution to the mandate during these past three years had been to support States and other stakeholders in bridging the gap between the international human rights legal framework on housing and territorial policies capable of fulfilling, protecting and promoting those rights. Since the 1990s there had been a growing recognition of the importance of adopting a human rights approach in the resolution of conflicts and peace building. It had taken longer for the human rights implications of post-disaster to be clearly recognized by the international community. This recognition was a positive development but it was not enough: human rights principles and standards had to be translated into concrete policies. In both post-disaster and post-conflict situations there was an inevitable tension between the pressing need to act quickly and decisively in order to facilitate the return of the displaced to their lands and homes, and the need to be comprehensive and thorough in dealing with what were in fact very complex questions. In this context, too often human rights and in particular the rights to adequate housing had been "sacrificed" - they had not been adequately or sufficiently translated into concrete actions.

Syria, Croatia and Kazakhstan spoke as concerned countries.

In the interactive dialogue, concerning the right to food, speakers said the Special Rapporteur on the right to food had highlighted a positive relationship between agro ecology and the right to food and had underscored the importance of international cooperation with regard to agricultural production. A comprehensive approach to tackle food insecurity with a special focus on long-term structural causes was needed, otherwise, the state of food security in the world might further deteriorate. States should implement public policies supporting the adoption of agro ecological practices by devoting the maximum of their capacities and resources to the progressive realisation of the right to food. There was no question that sustainable agriculture was the preferred choice for governments and farmers, but the fundamental question remained the implementation and institutionalisation of agro ecology in policy and practice. Speakers supported the recommendation made in the report that donors should support agricultural development by investing in technical assistance and capacity building, as well as technology transfer. It was unfortunate that the vagaries of the international system often compelled States with limited resources to rationalise their national balance sheets as opposed to encourage them to introduce new methods and techniques. Speakers endorsed the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, particularly those that urged donors to engage in long-term relationships with partner countries and support South-South cooperation on the dissemination and adoption of agro ecological practices.

With regard to adequate housing, speakers agreed with the Special Rapporteur that housing had inherent social value of vital importance to social stability, poverty alleviation and development. The impact of armed conflict and natural disasters could be devastating on communities and could force the populations into displacement. The poor and socially disadvantaged were most likely to be severely affected in those contexts. Realisation of the right to adequate housing in emergencies could take time and speakers supported the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur that governments should provide immediate and temporary shelter for those affected by armed conflict and natural disasters. Post-disaster and post-conflict situations could have devastating impacts on the populations and affect disproportionately those who were socially disadvantaged. As the world struggled to cope with the impact of natural disasters and armed conflict, the focus of the report was both topical and opportune. Speakers shared the general concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur in her conclusions and recommendations, in particular with regard to the effective consultation and direct participation of affected communities in the design and implementation of post-disaster rehabilitation responses. For a rehabilitation plan to be successful, it had to involve people and representative institutions in the decision-making process, help them to make informed choices and reflect their priorities and aspirations in programme deliverables. It also had to strengthen civil society institutions, community-based organizations, and women's groups through building partnerships and collaborations in the implementation process.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue on the right to food and the right to adequate housing were Chile, China, Brazil, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Netherlands, Maldives, Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, Cuba, Luxembourg, Germany, Algeria, Israel, Iran, Thailand, Djibouti, United States, Serbia, Honduras, India, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Ecuador, Finland, Norway, Canada, Morocco, Australia, Ghana, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Holy See, Palestine, Qatar, Switzerland, Sudan, Venezuela, Bangladesh, African Union, Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, Uruguay, Ethiopia, and the European Union.

The Council today is holding a full day of meetings from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the afternoon meeting, it will hold a clustered interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Documents

The Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, (A/HRC/16/49), explores how States can and must achieve a reorientation of their agricultural systems towards modes of production that are highly productive, highly sustainable and that contribute to the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food.

Communications to and From Governments, (A/HRC/16/49/Add.1), is a summary of communications sent and replies received from governments and other actors.

Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic (29 August to 7 September 2010), (A/HRC/16/49/Add.2), makes a general assessment of the enjoyment of the right to food in the Syrian Arab Republic, an overview of the challenges posed by drought and climate change and of the enjoyment of the right to food by specific groups, and a right-to-food analysis of the challenges faced by the Government in its transition to a social market economy. The Special Rapporteur concludes the report with recommendations addressed to the Government and the international community.

Preliminary Note on the Mission to the People's Republic of China (15 to 23 December), (A/HRC/16/49/Add.3), examines the efforts made by China in realizing the right to adequate food and the obstacles faced, using a framework reflecting the main components of the right to adequate food. Increasing food availability, while important, is not enough to ensure the realization of the right to food. Accessibility also needs to be addressed, by policies aimed at the areas and populations that are still vulnerable to food insecurity. Adequacy requires that appropriate attention be paid to the nutritional dimensions of the right to food and the food systems must be sustainable: satisfying current needs should not be at the expense of the country's ability to meet future needs.

The Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Raquel Rolnik, (A/HRC/16/42), underlines the importance of integrating human rights standards, and particularly the right to adequate housing, in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction processes. While taking account of the differences existing between post-conflict and post-disaster situations, the report focuses on common issues, and particularly on three key entry points: security of tenure, consultation and participation, and institutional coordination, through which the elements of the right to adequate housing are highlighted. To conclude, the report addresses a number of recommendations to States and the international community on how to improve prevention, relief and rehabilitation efforts by incorporating the right to adequate housing.

Communications to and From Governments, (A/HRC/16/42/Add.1), is a summary of communications sent and replies received from governments and other actors.

Mission to Croatia (5 to 13 July 2010), (A/HRC/16/42/Add.2), provides a brief overview of the evolution of the national housing situation in Croatia, discusses the challenges to security of tenure in transitional and post-conflict Croatia; analyses the realization of the right to adequate housing of vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons, minorities, homeless people, low-income families and young people; and examines the present and future challenges of housing policies with regards to social housing, affordability, access to basic infrastructure and services, and participation and accountability in the design and implementation of policies. The Special Rapporteur concludes her report with a number of recommendations addressed to the Government of Croatia and to the international community.

Mission to Kazakhstan (6 to 13 September 2010), (A/HRC/16/42/Add.3), details the Special Rapporteur's trip to the country, the purpose of which was to gather first-hand information on the status of the realization of the right to adequate housing and other related human rights in Kazakhstan. In particular, the Special Rapporteur focused on the adverse impact of the global economic and financial crises on the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing and on the large-scale evictions or displacement of individuals and communities living in or around the cities of Astana and Almaty. During her visit to Astana and Almaty, the Special Rapporteur met with a wide range of Government representatives and non-State actors, and received testimonies from several people alleging violations of their right to adequate housing.

Preliminary Note on the Mission to the World Bank Group (26 October to 1 November 2010), (A/HRC/16/42/Add.4), details the Special Rapporteur's mission to the World Bank Group, the purpose of which was to explore the relation between the policies and projects supported by the World Bank Group and the right to adequate housing.

Presentation of Reports on Right to Food and Adequate Housing

OLIVIER DE SCHUTTER, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, said that this report was being presented when food prices had been increasing for eight months straight, with a disproportionate impact on developing countries which imported over 20 per cent of their food requirements. The world had entered in the new era of weather shocks and food prices would still change under the influence of climate change. The question now was how to enable countries to feed themselves. The crisis was not only the supply crises but income crisis; it was a nutrition crisis as all too often poor people, even though they might have enough calories, did not eat diverse food and were suffering from micronutrient deficiencies. The approach to agriculture must be radically reoriented; it imitated the industrial approach and the world had succeeded in creating an oil-based agriculture. Within the scientific community there was a need for observations and change in directions. Old recipes were no longer valid and the world must find the way forward for agro ecology, whereby agriculture was done in sync with nature. Agriculture in this approach was seen as a cycle, where waste was used to fertilize the soil.
Agro ecology had numerous advantages over industrial agriculture. Apart from the ability to increase yields spectacularly, it was a solution to rural poverty. It meant that rural households could produce more at lower costs, without the risk of entering the vicious cycle of debt. One such practice was planting desmodium in corn fields to repel insects and this simple technique doubled the yields at much lower costs. Countries that encouraged those practices reduced their imports of agricultural inputs, the price of which was constantly on the increase as those products were oil-based. Thirdly, agro ecology was the best possible response to climate change. If the impact of deforestation was taken into account, agriculture today was responsible for 33 per cent of greenhouse gasses emissions, and almost half of those emissions came from unsustainable agricultural practices. In the face of climate change, industrial agriculture was without natural defences, while agro ecology was a source of resilience and could become a carbon sink, instead of being one of principal causes of climate change today. Fourthly, agro ecology provided definitive nutritional advantage to communities that practiced it. More diversified agriculture enabled access to diverse micronutrients, thus improving the nutritional status of the people.

Agro ecology would not emerge spontaneously only because it offered numerous advantages. Governments had the responsibility to prepare the transition to agro ecology and enable access for poor farmers. Brazil was helping other countries through very promising South-South cooperation. The horizontal transmission of knowledge, peasant-to-peasant, should be encouraged. Very many experiments in agro ecology had given remarkable results, even on a large scale. Unfortunately those experiments were too few and the Special Rapporteur called upon those States which accorded particular importance to the right to food to adopt strategies in order to transform the vision of nourishing and productive agriculture into Government action which created prosperity in rural and urban areas, less oil-dependent and more resilient to climate extremes.

RAQUEL ROLNIK, Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living and on the Right to Non Discrimination in this Context, said that she was presenting her last thematic report, her reports on her missions to Croatia and Kazakhstan, her preliminary note on her mission to the World Bank Group and her report summarizing the communications sent to and received from Governments in relation with alleged violations of the right to adequate housing. Coming from a practitioner background on urban and housing policies, she believed that her main contribution to the mandate during these past three years had been to support States and other stake holders in bridging the gap between the international human rights legal framework on housing and territorial polices capable of fulfilling, protecting and promoting those rights. In this context, she had tried on one hand to produce materials “translating” the right to adequate housing in international legal framework into common citizens framework on housing and territorial polices, even on a large scale. Unfortunately those experiments were too few and the Special Rapporteur called upon those States which accorded particular importance to the right to food to adopt strategies in order to transform the vision of nourishing and productive agriculture into Government action which created prosperity in rural and urban areas, less oil-dependent and more resilient to climate extremes.

Since the 1990s there had been a growing recognition of the importance of adopting a human rights approach in the resolution of conflicts and peace building. It had taken longer for the human rights implications of post-disaster to be clearly recognized, but the international community now had documents such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee Operational Guidelines and the Field Manual on Human Rights Protection in Situations of Natural Disasters. This recognition was a positive development but it was not enough: human rights principles and standards had to be translated into concrete policies. In both post-disaster and post-conflict situations there was an inevitable tension between the pressing need to act quickly and decisively in order to facilitate the reintegration of the displaced to their lands and homes, and the need to be comprehensive and thorough in dealing with what were in fact very complex questions. In this context, too often human rights and in particular the rights to adequate housing had been "sacrificed" - they had not been adequately or sufficiently translated into concrete actions. Particularly, because of the political economy of land actors involved in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction processes had skirted around the issue of land rights, which was crucial for the realization of the right to adequate housing and had not made institutional or financial provision for either the acquisition of well located land for the landless or for creating more secure rights for the vulnerable in situ. This had led to disastrous consequences particularly for the most vulnerable segments of the population. In her report she had explored why it was crucial to adopt a human rights approach in these situations, including why it was so important to truly integrate the right to adequate housing and what did this mean concretely. She underlined that while there were differences between post-disaster and post-conflict contexts her report mainly focused on common issues and questions that arose in both contexts.

Ms. Rolnik said the adoption of a human rights based approach, and particularly the integration of the right to adequate housing in reconstruction processes, was of particular value to understand the nature of the impact of conflict and disasters, and therefore to understand housing not only as a physical but also primarily as a social asset. This approach was also critically important to shape the reconstruction in terms of long-term sustainability and not only as initial relief operations. Finally, thinking in terms of human rights means to orient the international community efforts toward the most affected by conflicts and disasters, the most vulnerable, considering them as the holders of rights to be fulfilled and not only victims to be supported.

**Statements by Concerned Countries**

FAYSAL KLABAS HAMOUJ Syria, speaking as a concerned country, said Syria thanked the relatively balanced report from the Special Rapporteur on the right to food on his visit to Syria. The Government's policy was to provide adequate food to all citizens with a priority on rice, sugar and bread. Syria had been facing a harsh general drought for the past five years. In 2004 the Government established a drought early warning system and in 2006 it devised a national strategy to manage drought in addition to the establishment of a Directorate for Drought and a Development Foundation. The Government had launched, with the United Nations mission, a flash appeal with a required budget that would reach $ 94 million but the response of donor countries and organizations had not reached that amount with only $ 6 million dollars allocated. The response of Syria to the problem of drought was effective and swift. The response was based on social surveys to identify poverty pockets and included development projects such as the provision of micro credit funds in villages and cash payments to most affected families and to ensure portable water in the villages that were most impacted. There was also a post drought project to rebuild capacity.

VESNA VUKOVIC (Croatia), speaking as a concerned country, said that Croatia studied with great interest and attention the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, which outlined the efforts of the Croatian Government in responding to housing challenges, particularly those that were the legacy of the armed conflict of the 1990s. Croatia remained fully committed to continuing the development of the framework for the realisation of the right to adequate housing and with further concrete and targeted efforts in this context. The housing situation in Croatia was shaped by two strong factors, that of armed conflict and the economic transition to a market economy. Tenancy rights in Croatia were non-property rights, as declared in the judgement of European Court of Human Rights.
Croatia had the impression that the report only to a limited extent outlined the important results and progress achieved in the implementation of the Housing Care Programme for refugees, former tenancy rights holders, and the reconstruction of property destroyed during armed conflict. Croatia was implementing a comprehensive housing policy aimed at providing conditions for local integration of refugees and displaced persons who expressed their wish to return. While many positive developments had taken place in Croatia in the field of the realisation of the right to housing, there were evident challenges that must be adequately addressed. 

Concerning the comprehensive approach to human rights and social protection in the implementation of the right to adequate housing, the Special Rapporteur emphasized the importance of human rights in natural disasters and that the right to housing was of particular importance. For Chile this was a central theme after the country suffered from an earthquake in 2010 and the Government placed housing at the centre of its public policy. The challenge of reconstruction should be linked to public policies that went beyond emergency interventions and Chile's public policies included a valuing of cultures and a validating of housing including. The Government had created its policy, United Chile Builds Better, which included subsidies for most needy families. Chile appreciated the focus of the report and the conclusion that all Member States should realize that housing had a social dimension. Cooperation was an effective tool in early recovery from disasters and Chile has benefited from United Nation’s assistance. Chile encouraged the Council’s awareness of the human rights dimension in disaster response.

Furthermore, China confirmed that it was currently adopting national policies to protect farmers and to provide them with the same access to social services and medical care. As such, the Government was continuing to establish a social security framework to protect the inhabitants of rural areas. China also underlined its support to developing countries and highlighted the fact that it had gone from a recipient country in food aid to a donor country. Finally, China took note of the preliminary note drafted by the Special Rapporteur that donors should support agricultural development by investing in technical assistance and capacity building, as well as technology transfer. On the right to adequate housing, the Organization of the Islamic Conference supported the recommendation made in the report that donors should support agricultural development by investing in technical assistance and capacity building, as well as technology transfer. On the right to adequate housing, the Organization of the Islamic Conference supported the recommendation made in the report that donors should support agricultural development by investing in technical assistance and capacity building, as well as technology transfer.

SAEED SARWAR (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in his report had highlighted a positive relationship between agro ecology and the right to food. In Brazil, the right to food had benefited from national strategies related to technical assistance and capacity building of small farmers, as well as access to land, credit and public purchase of agricultural goods. As a result, Brazil had witnessed a decrease in levels of poverty and food and nutritional insecurity of the population. The Special Rapporteur also underscored the importance of international cooperation with regard to agricultural production and Brazil understood that international cooperation must occur on a horizontal, non-interventionist basis and with due regard to local circumstances. Brazil recalled that a lasting solution to the issue at hand required a comprehensive approach to tackle food insecurity with a special focus on long-term structural causes; otherwise, the state of food security in the world might further deteriorate. Concerning the report by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Brazil said that the Government attached great importance to the right to food prior to his coming visit in China and the delegation said that it hoped that the ensuing report would be written in a fair and balanced manner.

Joao Ernesto Christofolo (Brazil) said that the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in his report had highlighted a positive relationship between agro ecology and the right to food. In Brazil, the right to food had benefited from national strategies related to technical assistance and capacity building of small farmers, as well as access to land, credit and public purchase of agricultural goods. As a result, Brazil had witnessed a decrease in levels of poverty and food and nutritional insecurity of the population. The Special Rapporteur also underscored the importance of international cooperation with regard to agricultural production and Brazil understood that international cooperation must occur on a horizontal, non-interventionist basis and with due regard to local circumstances. Brazil recalled that a lasting solution to the issue at hand required a comprehensive approach to tackle food insecurity with a special focus on long-term structural causes; otherwise, the state of food security in the world might further deteriorate. Concerning the report by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Brazil said that the Government attached great importance to the need of guaranteeing adequate housing to people, especially in post-disaster and post-conflict situations. Brazil agreed with the Special Rapporteur that housing had inherent social value of vital importance to social stability, poverty alleviation and development.

Elvira Azimova (Kazakhstan), speaking as concerned country, thanked the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and said that Kazakhstan had undertaken reforms in developing human rights protection mechanisms and measures to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. This bill of law for the strengthening of the right to adequate housing for people who needed social protection, including orphans, had been introduced to Parliament. The list of citizens with the right for free housing from the State housing fund had been extended. Referring to forced evictions, it should be noted that the legislation of Kazakhstan included comprehensive norms on this issue. Forced evictions were carried out only on the basis of a court decision. They were compensated and were executed with a condition of a one-year prior notification and lack of alternative ways to satisfy the State’s needs. The person being evicted always had the right to appeal the decision on eviction in court or in the public procurator’s office. Regarding the statistics of the Special Rapporteur in the field of shared construction, Kazakhstan noted the State’s measures for overcoming the crisis. They had managed to accomplish most of the objectives concerning shared construction and as a result around 54,000 shareholders had solved their housing problems.

Interactive Dialogue

Juan Pedro Sepulveda Castro (Chile) said Chile appreciated the report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and the importance of human rights in natural disasters and that the right to housing was of particular importance. For Chile this was a central theme after the country suffered from an earthquake in 2010 and the Government placed housing at the centre of its public policy. The challenge of reconstruction should be linked to public policies that went beyond emergency interventions and Chile’s public policies included a valuing of cultures and a validating of housing including. The Government had created its policy, United Chile Builds Better, which included subsidies for most needy families. Chile appreciated the focus of the report and the conclusion that all Member States should realize that housing had a social dimension. Cooperation was an effective tool in early recovery from disasters and Chile has benefited from United Nation’s assistance. Chile encouraged the Council’s awareness of the human rights dimension in disaster response.

Xu Jjing (China) said that China had listened with care to the two reports that had been presented on the right to food and the right to adequate housing. The Chinese Government reiterated that it paid high attention to the promotion and protection of the right to food. China had achieved a historical breakthrough from the inadequate provision of food to striking a sustainable balance between domestic food supply and demand. China was also ahead of schedule regarding its obligations to the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly with respect to poverty alleviation.

Furthermore, China confirmed that it was currently adopting national policies to protect farmers and to provide them with the same access to social services and medical care. As such, the Government was continuing to establish a social security framework to protect the inhabitants of rural areas. China also underlined its support to developing countries and highlighted the fact that it had gone from a recipient country in food aid to a donor country. Finally, China took note of the preliminary note drafted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food prior to his coming visit in China and the delegation said that it hoped that the ensuing report would be written in a fair and balanced manner.

Saeed Sarwar (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in his report had highlighted a positive relationship between agro ecology and the right to food. In Brazil, the right to food had benefited from national strategies related to technical assistance and capacity building of small farmers, as well as access to land, credit and public purchase of agricultural goods. As a result, Brazil had witnessed a decrease in levels of poverty and food and nutritional insecurity of the population. The Special Rapporteur also underscored the importance of international cooperation with regard to agricultural production and Brazil understood that international cooperation must occur on a horizontal, non-interventionist basis and with due regard to local circumstances. Brazil recalled that a lasting solution to the issue at hand required a comprehensive approach to tackle food insecurity with a special focus on long-term structural causes; otherwise, the state of food security in the world might further deteriorate. Concerning the report by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Brazil said that the Government attached great importance to the need of guaranteeing adequate housing to people, especially in post-disaster and post-conflict situations. Brazil agreed with the Special Rapporteur that housing had inherent social value of vital importance to social stability, poverty alleviation and development.
IRENE KNOBEN (Netherlands) said that the 2008 food price crisis increased the awareness of the need to reinvest in agriculture. The Government of the Netherlands fully shared the view of the Special Rapporteur that for the realisation of the right to adequate food, there was a need to reorient agricultural systems towards methods of production that contributed to food security and were sustainable and productive at the same time. However, given the diversity in agro ecological conditions faced by farmers and the increasing use of marginal land for production, the Government felt that smallholders should not be deprived of opportunities to maximise their production and increase profits from farming. Finally, the Netherlands asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on how private and public investments could complement each other to achieve sustainable modes of food production in order to realise the human right to adequate food.

IRUTHISHAM ADAM (Maldives) said that the Maldives concurred with many of the findings contained in the report, in particular with the right to housing in the context of natural disasters, including those attributed to climate change. It was also clear that existing vulnerabilities were exacerbated in disaster contexts, with the poor, women, children and marginalised groups bearing the brunt of the impact. The Maldives also agreed that the uneven distribution of the impacts of natural disasters across society made it imperative to adopt a rights-based approach to recovery and reconstruction. In closing, the delegation asked the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing to describe the steps that were being taken to ensure that disaster responses followed a rights-based approach.

OSITADINMA ANAEDU (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said the African Group particularly welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food focusing on how States could and must achieve a reorientation of their agricultural systems towards modes of production that were highly productive and sustainable and contribute to the realisation of the human rights to food. It was unfortunate that the vagaries of the international system often compelled States with limited resources to rationalise their national balance sheets as opposed to encourage them to introduce new methods and techniques. The African Group fully endorsed the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur particularly those that spoke to donors to engage in long-term relationships with partner countries and support South-South cooperation on the dissemination and adoption of agro ecological practices. Turning to the right to adequate housing, the African Group was convinced that the two situations identified by the Special Rapporteur were distinctive not only in their nature but also required dedicated set of responses by States, with the assistance of international community to address them. Post-disasters and post-conflict situations could have devastating impacts on the populations and affect disproportionately those who were socially disadvantaged. The African Group saw the imperative for coordinated and expedited response in the provision of housing relief and rehabilitation efforts.

LUIS AMOROS NUNEZ (Cuba) said that nowadays as never before it was possible to see the importance of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The dramatic increase in the prices of food over the past few months added on the existing poverty in the world. Purchasing corn, rice, sugar, oil was becoming impossible for large numbers of people because of the price hikes. The food crisis was also one of the root causes of the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa. People were hungry and the numbers of hungry people would soon reach one billion. The crisis meant that a genie was let out of the bottle and people would take to the streets once more to achieve their right to eat and survive. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the global food crisis, Cuba asked the Special Rapporteur on the right to food to give his opinion on the most important measures to take and reverse the trends in short terms. Also, what would happen if the prices continued to increase? Concerning the right to adequate housing, Cuba said it was important to address this right in the context of post-conflicts and post-disasters. Cuba had recently had to deal with a crisis situation in which it was expected to deliver on its obligations in the midst of the global financial and economic crises. Cuba asked the Special Rapporteur if industrial countries could do more so that developing countries could better address those issues.

JEAN FEYDER (Luxembourg) congratulated the Special Rapporteur on the right to food for his excellent work and for the report he submitted. Luxembourg was concerned about the explosion of food prices that according to the Food and Agriculture Organization had now reached the same levels of 2008. This produced tension which required urgent attention and led to many people being in poverty. The international community was far from Millennium Development Goal number one that suggested in 2000 that the production of rice, wheat and other staple foods could ensure food sufficiency by 2015. For some years, and with brutal force, the environmental and climate had been seriously threatened. Eco systems were deteriorating at a speed never seen before. This particularly concerned water, biodiversity and fishing resources. Climate change affected conditions for farming and harvesting. Food security was threatened with new uncertainties and agriculture was the victim and the cause of climate change. Luxembourg noted that the report responded to these problems and supported priority for small farmers, biological production, diversification of production, access to credit, knowledge and awareness raising and gave particular attention to women in agriculture.

TIMO BAUER-SAVAGE (Germany) thanked the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing for her dedication and her convincing report on the wide and difficult issue of post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction processes. In these situations, violations to the right to adequate housing were particularly widespread and the effects particularly hard. As pointed out by the Special Rapporteur, these impacts were oftentimes not intended or planned but were the result of inappropriate policies, neglect and oversight. Nevertheless, the non-intentional impacts could be tackled by preventative measures, which included a well-considered long-term strategy. Germany asked the Special Rapporteur if she could provide further information on the concrete steps that she would undertake to make fruitful cooperation possible amongst all the relevant players.

IDRISS JAZAIRY (Algeria) said Algeria wished to congratulate the two Special Rapporteurs on their respective reports. The topic of agro ecology as a sustainable and fair way to achieve the right to food was noted by Algeria, especially the inclusion of three principle elements: availability, accessibility and guaranteed access to food. States must be determined to implement public policies that promote adoption of agro ecology. Algeria noted the antithesis between accelerating urbanization and the launching of agro ecology. The Government would like to know what contribution could the Special Rapporteur make to avoid a chronic lack of food supplies and would also like to be apprised of the steep rise in agricultural prices and its impact on developing countries in the Middle East and North African countries. Following several earthquakes, Algeria had to overcome infrastructure problems and restoration of confidence of the people and would like to hear the Special Rapporteur’s evaluation of international cooperation in terms of capacity building following natural disasters to ensure adequate housing. Algeria would have wished to see Palestine included in the report and the right to housing there and how the Special Rapporteur envisioned the implementation in the occupied land of a legal redress to forced expulsions. Algeria welcomed the plan of the Special Rapporteur to visit Algeria in July of this year.

NINA BEN-AMI (Israel) thanked the Special Rapporteur for the right to food for his report on the situation in Syria regarding the right to food, which provided an overview of challenges posed by drought and climate change and the enjoyment of the right to food by specific groups. Four years of drought had pushed two to three million people into extreme poverty and Israel asked if the Special Rapporteur agreed with opinions that indicated that corruption and failed administration were to blame for lack of national statistics.
on the drilling situation in Syria. Also, in light of the climate change that was taking place in the region, Israel asked what recommendations the Special Rapporteur would make to Syria in terms of regional cooperation that would help mitigate this issue. In the report, the Special Rapporteur dedicated a short section to the Golan Heights and allegations that had been made regarding disparities between the water usage allotted to Jewish and Druze residents of the Golan. The Israeli water authority was aware that there were improvements which needed to be made to increase the water supply to Druze farmers on the Golan Heights, and significant efforts and resources were being invested in this regard.

MOHAMMAD ZAREIAN (Iran) said that climate change was a major challenge to the realization of food security in most parts of the world and nationally appropriate mitigation action was of utmost important, especially for those countries who were more responsible for climate change. States should also support decentralized participatory research and the dissemination of knowledge about the best sustainable agriculture practices by relying on existing farmers’ organizations and networks, and including schemes designed specifically for women. On the other hand, improving the ability of procedures practicing sustainable agriculture to access markets, using instruments such as public procurement, credit, farmers’ markets, and creating a supporting trade and macroeconomic framework and engaging in long-term relationship with partner countries, and supporting ambitious programmes and policies to scale up agro-ecological approaches for lasting change, including genuine multi-polar engagement with public authorities and experts, should be taken into consideraration.

SEK WANNAMETHEE (Thailand) noted the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and expressed Thailand’s concern about the food crisis in many parts of the world, especially in Africa. Agriculture counted for more than 50 per cent of the Thai economy. Thailand would like to share its best practices in sustainable development policies which included the development of systemic guidelines for proper management of land and water resources known as the New Theory Agriculture. Thailand supported women’s participation in development activities at the national, regional and international levels and welcomed the Special Rapporteur’s recommendations to request the accumulation of best practices on rapid scaling up of agro ecology as well as South-South cooperation.

MOUSSA ISMAEL HASSAN (Djibouti) said that the food crisis of 2007-2008 which had been evidenced by price hikes in some regions had brought new attention to agricultural production. The dynamic development of multifunctional agriculture demanded that several factors were in place, such as continued political commitment, promotion of South-South and North-South cooperation, promotion of sustainable and responsible practices and making local markets accessible. In order to confront food deficits, the Government of Djibouti had set up a department charged with food security which designed cooperation programmes in allocation of land with Ethiopian and Sudanese neighbours, in order to guarantee access to adequate food to its citizens. Djibouti asked the Special Rapporteur if there was a need to look into issues of food sovereignty in the discussions and negotiations at the World Trade Organization to ensure that priority attention was given to effective application of the right to food.

PATRICK REILLY (United States) said the United States considered meeting the challenge of feeding an expanding world population in an environmentally sustainable way to be a top priority. They agreed that agro ecology offered an opportunity to increase food production in a more ecologically friendly way. In the United States, the Department of Agriculture as well as several leading universities had taken the lead in promoting agro ecology education and practices. Since 1988, the United States Department of Agriculture had managed the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education programme, which had helped advance farming systems that were profitable, productive, environmentally sound and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants programme. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education programme provided a model of involving people in guiding the direction the research took, which was one of the great strengths of the programme. The United States welcomed the thoughts of the Special Rapporteur on how the agriculture research being done in the developed world might assist the developing world, and on ways that innovations being done in the developing world could inform agricultural research in the more developed world.

JELISAVETA DJURICKOVIC-TUVIC (Serbia) said after the regional conference in Belgrade in March 2010, countries of the region had invested additional efforts to resolve the protracted refugee situation. Serbia was cooperating with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and countries of the region to find durable solutions for remaining refugees and internally displaced persons. Serbia welcomed the appointment by the High Commissioner for Refugees of a Personal Envoy with the aim of speeding up the process of needs assessment and of taking forward the issue of finding durable and acceptable solutions for all the remaining affected people in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The envisaged donor conference to address the needs associated with durable solutions to be held in 2011 should be an important step in that direction. A durable solution for the refugee problem should be based on the principles of comprehensiveness, including the refugee rights, non-discrimination and full transparency.

GIAMPAOLO CARMELO RIZZO ALVARADO (Honduras) said that the report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing contained the experience of Honduras in the context of the response to hurricane Mitch in 1998. The National Master Plan for Reconstruction and Transformation developed following this tragedy was the result of broad public consultations with representative sectors of the society. Its objective was to establish policies oriented on economic reactivation and job creation through recovery development of productive sectors and infrastructure; poverty reduction and integrated human development to improve coverage of basic social services; reduction of vulnerability through appropriate management of natural resources; and the promotion of participation in public life. It had been difficult, especially since hurricane Mitch had been the worst natural disaster to hit Latin America in 200 years. The Government of Honduras was aware that the process of reconstruction was not yet over and had established a series of programmes for the reduction of the proportion of households in poverty and to reduce illegal occupation of land.

GOPINATHAN ACHAMKULANGARE (India) said India supported the theme chosen by the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing for her third report on the importance of integrating human rights standards, particularly the right to adequate housing, in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction processes. As the world struggled to cope with the impact of natural disasters and armed conflict, the focus of the report was both topical and opportune. India shared the general concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur in her conclusions and recommendations, in particular with regard to the effective consultation and direct participation of affected communities in the design and implementation of post-disaster rehabilitation responses. For a rehabilitation plan to be successful, it had to involve people and representative institutions in the decision-making process, help them to make informed choices and reflect their priorities and aspirations in programme deliverables. It also had to strengthen civil society institutions, community-based organizations, and women’s groups through building partnerships and collaborations in the implementation process.

JOAQUIM A.M.L. DA FONSECA (Timor-Leste) said there was not sufficient time to comment on the draft report on adequate housing
and despite minor inaccuracies and misinterpretation of facts, the report in general presented accurate figures concerning Timor-Leste. The delegation would like to know what would be considered timely in addressing housing rights in a post-conflict environment. The report failed to consider the challenges and dilemmas countries faced in assessing the timelines and adequateness of measures to address issues related to housing rights, including the land tenure security. Timor-Leste took a more prudent approach in its national reconstruction process and made the development of social capabilities for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence preconditions to ensure equal access to housing and land for all individuals and communities. The draft law considered by the National Parliament was an important piece of legislation which would attempt to address some of the land related issues which dated back to centuries of colonial regimes. For post conflict States, the timeline referred to in the report as a delay represented an unrealistic timeframe for reform as identified in the Dili Declaration of Fragile States.

WINNIE SITHOLE MWENDA (Zambia) said Zambia welcomed the observations of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food that in order for States to take effective measures towards the realization of the right to food, food systems should be developed in order to meet three broad objectives namely: availability of food for everyone; availability of income for small farmers; and that agriculture do not compromise its ability to sustain future needs. The Government of Zambia realized the importance of agriculture, having dedicated a considerable number of years, and welcomed the alternatives that agro ecology could assist States in meeting the three objectives referred to above. The delegation of Zambia had noted the Special Rapporteur’s concern that while women faced a number of obstacles in the agriculture sector, only 10 per cent of the development assistance took gender issues into account. The delegation of Zambia therefore wished to urge all cooperative partners and recipient States to ensure that their agriculture policies and programmes were engendered.

MARIA DEL CARMEN VIVAR (Ecuador) said Ecuador was pleased at the reports and valued the right to food as outlined in chapter 3 of the Ecuador constitution which made it an obligation of the Government. Ecuador had developed the Features of Ecuador programme which set forth the principles of food security and awareness and the importance of training regarding healthy food. Investments were made to promote innovation and technology in the agricultural sector and an enhancement of food culture through projects such as food mapping of indigenous peoples were carried out to improve their food habits and maintain traditional knowledge. The National Assembly approved a basic law for food sovereignty. Agro ecology was an efficient alternative to maintain the food supply. Ecuador would like to know the Special Rapporteur’s impressions on how to manage the impact on natural disasters on vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities.

HANNU HIMANEN (Finland) said Finland commended the consistent work of the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and her dedication to raise awareness of housing rights and to empower local communities to advance their rights. In her annual report, the Special Rapporteur identified gender specific challenges to the realisation of the right to adequate housing and illustrated by concrete examples on how, for example, compensation payment processes were still male-dominated even though women reportedly participated more actively than men in the community dialogue and reconciliation processes. In closing, Finland asked the Special Rapporteur to further elaborate on how to ensure that a rapid assessment of pre-existing tenure and property rights systems in the aftermath of a disaster or conflict could integrate a gender perspective into the analysis and how to actively seek areas of opportunity for women in such contexts.

BEATE STIRO (Norway) thanked the Special Rapporteur on the right to food for a comprehensive and politically challenging report on agro ecology and the right to food. Norway welcomed this report, which was thought-provoking and indeed timely. The Special Rapporteur was quoting the United Nations Environment Programme that by 2080, 600 million additional people could be at risk of hunger, as a direct result of climate change. This reality was an important point of departure for Norwegian development cooperation policy. In tackling food production, they agreed that it was not only a question of how much, but how. Some caution was however needed in order to ensure that agro ecology did not become a quick fix. Thus they wished to emphasize the report’s paragraphs 32 on farmer participation as being a key to success. It was essential that agro ecological approaches were based on a combination of scientifically based knowledge and farmers’ own, locally based knowledge. Finally, Norway would have liked to see a clearer link to green growth in order to underline the economic potential of sustainable use of natural resources.

VICTORIA BERRY (Canada) said that Canada recognized that increased agricultural production and productivity should not come at the expense of the environment. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food recommended reorienting public spending in agriculture by prioritizing the provision of public goods and while Canada supported public investment infusions into the agro economy, it believed there was a role for private investment. What were the Special Rapporteur’s views on the role of private spending and investment in achieving the right to food and were there best practices that he would highlight in this regard? Canada noted there were several major initiatives underway on food related issues and would like to know the Special Rapporteur’s views on how his work would complement these efforts to ensure policy coherence on achieving the right to food in the context of food security and to avoid fragmented efforts in the face of the re-emergence of the food crisis?

MOHAMED ACHGALOU (Morocco) thanked the Special Rapporteur for the report on the right to adequate housing. The Special Rapporteur quite rightly pointed out that the longer people were displaced, the greater the risk of other violations to their fundamental human rights. In this regard, the Kingdom of Morocco had done its best to address the right to adequate housing in the aftermath of earthquake that hit the Al-Hoceima region of Morocco in February of 2004. In terms of the right to food, the reform of agricultural policies in Morocco was a testament to the significant efforts undertaken by the Government in this regard. Given the current rise in food prices, Governments had the obligation to deal with the right to food. Morocco was committed to implementing a global approach to the right to food, based on recognising the know-how of farmers and ensuring food security and access to international markets. The Green Morocco Plan touched upon the recommendations made in paragraph 43 of the Special Rapporteur’s report to ensure sustainable agricultural practices and food security.

SCOTT CLAREY (Australia) said Australia welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. Australia was committed to improve food security at global, regional and national levels and it provided emergency food assistance, including contributions to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Programme. Australia was an official assistant for rural development and was committed to increasing investment in agricultural research and development and to provide agriculture research to improve agriculture sustainability. Australia concurred with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur about the importance of good national agricultural policies and underlined the need to open an official food market to ensure food security. Australia would have welcomed an increased emphasis on reforming the global agriculture and food market in the Special Rapporteur’s report. In this regard a successful conclusion to the Doha Round in 2012 would be an important step to improve food security for all.
JUDGE KWAME OSEI (Ghana) said that Ghana noted the assertion in the report on the right to food that increasing food production to meet future needs was not sufficient and that increased food production would not allow significant progress in combating hunger and malnutrition if it was not combined with higher incomes and improved livelihoods for the poorest, particularly small-scale farmers in developing countries. Hunger today was more attributed to poverty than to low stocks or to global supplies unable to meet demand and Ghana endorsed the position expressed in the report that increasing the incomes of the poorest was the best way to combat hunger. Ghana shared the Special Rapporteur’s view on ensuring the right to food approach and appreciated the further expiation on the principles of availability, accessibility and adequacy as well as the objectives outlined to serve as guidelines for the establishment of food systems. Ghana looked forward to the assessment by the Committee on World Food Security and the High-level Panel of Experts on the potential of agro ecology to meet the current challenges in the areas of food security and nutrition.

GONZALO M. JORDAN (Argentina) said Argentina thanked the Special Rapporteur for both of their timely and interesting reports. Focussing on the right to food, Argentina agreed that States should endeavour to incorporate agro ecological principles into their national agricultural policies. However, given the current situation of constant growth in the demand for food, food security should remain the central focus of all Government initiatives. Agro ecology could lead to significant costs and, as such, capacity building and assistance to developing countries was important and should have been raised in the report. Moreover, Argentina said there needed to be improvements in market access as well as the elimination of export subsidies by developed countries, which could be addressed in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. Finally, Argentina said that it was working closely with the Food Security Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization and highlighted the importance of its work.

AHMED SULEIMAN IBRAHIM AL-AQUIL (Saudi Arabia) said Saudi Arabia took due note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and the concluding recommendations that were in it. Saudi Arabia reiterated a number of points in the report including the importance of the agricultural sector as well as the effect of the world financial crisis and the rise in prices. The report underlined the need of the application of science to ensure reasonable protection. The country had made efforts to help international humanitarian organizations to combat poverty and ensure food security for all. Saudi Arabia contributed to the Food and Agriculture Organization and they had won the world price for combating hunger. However they noted that there was a constant rise in the number of people who suffered from hunger and welcomed the role played by experts and specialists that addressed the reasons behind this food crisis.

SILVANO M. TOMASI (Holy See) said the right to food was a basic right linked to the right to life. Special attention should be directed to the 2.5 billion people dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. A crucial component was to ensure security of land tenure for farmers. Local markets should be efficient, transparent and open; barriers to export should be limited; food aid should not disrupt agriculture production and to prevent price volatility local food products should be protected. Food should not be like any commodity subject to speculation and political pressure. A comprehensive safety net should be established to make food products available at affordable prices.

DEEMA ASFOUR (Palestine) said that in paragraph 14 of the report on the right to adequate housing the Special Rapporteur mentioned that the right to housing was a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. Unfortunately, the right to adequate housing in the occupied Palestine territory was among one of basic human rights most frequently violated by Israeli authorities, either directly through practices of forced eviction or indirectly by threatening the viability of communities through restriction of movement. In East Jerusalem, Palestinians were still living with the confiscation of lands and private properties, while in the West Bank the Israeli authorities were cutting off communities from their agricultural land on the western side of the illegal wall. Home demolitions continued to be a great cause for concern and Palestine concluded by asking the Special Rapporteur to share her views on the situation of the destruction and demolition of Palestinian homes, particularly in East Jerusalem.

MANGOOR ABDULLA AL-SULAITIN (Qatar) thanked the Special Rapporteur on the right to food for his comprehensive report. This report looked at how countries could restore agricultural systems in order to guarantee sustained production and noted how countries had to re-arrange their budgetary system to bring new technologies. The Special Rapporteur noted the need for cooperation among countries of the south but also among north and south countries in practices regarding agro ecology. Qatar noted the responsibility of specialized agencies in ensuring that everyone enjoyed this right. In this context Qatar was investing in many countries of the world in the sphere of agriculture and believed that national food security was an essential element of national and regional security and Qatar had set up a national programme with regard to food security which conducted a study on best practices in the best possible use of resources to ensure food sustainability.

BARBARA FONTANA (Switzerland) said Switzerland would like to thank the Special Rapporteurs for their reports. On food security, Switzerland shared the views of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food but wanted to know his opinion on the role of the private sector in agro ecology. The re-orientation of the agricultural sector would require capacity building on behalf of small scale providers and this required political will. The participation of farmers in the agricultural economy was crucial, how should farmers be better included into the change toward agro ecology to ensure greater legitimacy of policies?

HAMZA AHMED (Sudan) began by recognising the importance of the role played by all women in the world, particularly those in Sudan, and congratulated them on the occasion of International Women’s Day. In light of the huge resources available to Sudan in the field of agriculture, the Government had successfully established initiatives to increase the domestic production and distribution of wheat, cereals and sugar and the comprehensive agricultural development plan had had a positive impact on rural women, many of whom had directly benefited from government subsidies.

In terms of the right to adequate housing, Sudan had enacted a number of laws to ensure the enjoyment of this right without discrimination. Subsidised housing had also been created for particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups. However, the recommendations made in the report did not urge developed countries to send development aid. Darfur was now reaping the fruits of peace and internally displaced persons in the area were now being resettled, despite the insufficient foreign aid that had been given to Sudan by foreign countries.

FELIX PENA RAMOS (Venezuela) said Venezuela appreciated the presentation by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and urged him to continue with this important work. The right to food security was a fundamental human right enshrined in the constitution. In his report the Special Rapporteur highlighted the need to move to sustainability which was an essential component of the right to food. Venezuela was concerned about the constant rise in food prices and said that this was a consequence of capitalist...
The imposition of prices by transnational corporations. Food prices were controlled by these firms and this had to be stopped. They would like to mention the regional effort made by the Alternativa Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra America in the field of food security, setting up a food market network and a food security fund.

NAHIDA SOBHAN (Bangladesh) said Bangladesh appreciated the Special Rapporteur on the right to food’s efforts to address strategies taking into account the particular vulnerability of the poorest farmers. Bangladesh fully agreed that increasing food production would not allow significant progress in combating hunger and malnutrition worldwide unless it was supported by other actions like ensuring higher incomes and improved livelihoods for the poorest. Bangladesh stated that the international environment and international policies, especially in the international trade regime, had both direct and indirect impacts on ensuring the right to food. South-South and North-South cooperation on the dissemination and adoption of agro ecological practices needed to address the particularity of different ecosystems. Bangladesh stated that incorporating the right to adequate housing in prevention, relief and rehabilitation efforts were important.

YAKDHAHAN EL HABIB (African Union) thanked the Special Rapporteur for his report on the right to food and the responsibility of States to ensure this right. Agricultural systems needed to focus on achieving certain key objectives, including access to markets. Moreover, world crises such as natural disasters and imbalanced international competition needed to be addressed when considering strategies on how to best meet the fundamental right to food. Without going into too many details, the transfer of technology was crucial to the effective development of the least developed countries and developed States had an obligation to ensure global food security. In conclusion, the African Union highlighted the importance of South-South and North-South cooperation as well as platforms through which regional and national best practices could be shared.

OSITADINMA ANAEDU (Nigeria) thanked the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing for her comprehensive report and said that Nigeria had a Master Plan in place for the development of its new federal capital, Abuja. In contravention of this plan, many of their citizens had erected illegal structures without approval and due process. In response the relevant agency of the Government was compelled to take the desired steps to remove such illegal structures to prevent the health hazard they posed to the occupants. It was pertinent to note that before any demolition was carried out in the capital city or any part of the country, residents of such an area usually served eviction notices and occupants with legal documents were compensated and relocated to new areas while those without documents were assisted to relocate to places of their choices. However, after a few years of relocation and compensation, it had been observed that some of the former occupants of the affected areas including new occupants relocated again to take possession, thereby necessitating the Government to ensure that residents of Abuja and it environs conformed to the master plan of the city.

NTHABISENQ MALEJANE (South Africa) said South Africa recognized the important role that the development of infrastructure played in the agricultural sector and proposed to rehabilitate water resources, windmills and irrigation schemes, projects intended to enhance food security and create job opportunities with a particular focus on women in rural areas. South Africa regretted that the report on the right to food failed to look at the major cause of hunger which was poverty. What was the reason for the absence of a reference to the New Green Revolution for Africa as the report was unclear on whether agro ecological approaches were seen as alternatives to the New Green Revolution proposed for Africa via the multi-institutional Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa? The right to adequate housing was enshrined in article 26 of the South African constitution and was in line with the government priority of building a better life for all. The Government earmarked funding to deal with post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

ALPHONSE KAYITAYIRE (Rwanda) said that Rwanda wished to make a few clarifications to the report on the right to housing, in particular with respect to housing policies in rural Rwanda. Since Rwanda was a very small country, it was necessary to optimise the use of arable land in order to increase national wealth, agricultural production and food security. In order to do this, the Government had to regroup certain rural inhabitants into nearby villages. Local populations were both directly and indirectly involved in these housing policies, as well as the design of new homes in rural areas. At the outset, many rural families were concerned about leaving their homes in remote, isolated areas for nearby villages but all received financial indemnities proportionate to the value of their land.

The Government of Rwanda was committed to establishing socially integrated and economically viable living conditions for all its citizens in both rural and urban areas. The younger generation better understood the advantages of increasing agricultural efficiency, which was a direct result from this housing policy in rural Rwanda. Finally, the delegation invited the Special Rapporteur to come to Rwanda to witness firsthand the significant progress made since the relocation of rural inhabitants.

MARIA LOURDES BONE (Uruguay) said Uruguay welcomed the report on the right to food and Uruguay as a mainly agricultural country was committed to ensure sustainably of natural resources and had incorporated the theme of agriculture in its national plan. Uruguay took note of the recommendations and had been working in that direction giving support to agricultural businesses led by families. With regards to agro agricultural practices they would like to know examples of such practices. With regard to the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Uruguay took note of the recommendations focusing on housing in post disasters and on the need to establish national policies that recognized that adequate housing was at the basis of poverty reduction. Uruguay had approved a national housing plan designed for the participation of vulnerable groups. The situation of poverty and exclusion required a convergent set of support to redistributing wealth and establishing equity. Uruguay had adopted a law which declared a socio-housing emergency and the involvement of families in building their housing projects was particularly interesting.

ALLEHONE MULUGETA ABEBE (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia attached great importance to improving the productivity of agriculture and enhancing its capacity to contribute to the realization of food security. The Government gave prime importance to ensuring food security and exerted utmost effort to achieve an environmentally sustainable, people-centered and fair agricultural policy. As a result Ethiopia achieved a sustained growth in its agricultural sector which benefited millions of its small farmers and their families. The agro ecology strategies of the Government included investing in the knowledge and skills of farmers, encouraging the role of model farmers in promoting best practices and using environmentally sustainable farming techniques. Small farmers were the bedrock of the country's agriculture policy and their direct participation in its implementation was vital as indicated by the report’s note of the use of on-farm experiments and model farmers in Ethiopia which demonstrated that the physical properties of soil on organic farms improved the drought resistance of crops.

JOELLE HIVONNET (European Union) said that with regard to adequate housing, the European Union fully shared the Special...
Rapporteur’s conclusion that there was a need to integrate human rights standards, including adequate housing, in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction processes. It was clear that in post-disaster and post-conflict situations, the affected people depended on the help of their Government as well as international help. In this process, all the social aspects of the right to adequate housing had to be taken into account, such as the affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and especially the cultural adequacy. The European Union asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on what measures could be taken to enhance the capacity of local or traditional institutions to address disputes involving housing, land and property.

On the right to food, the European Union shared the view of the Special Rapporteur that moving towards sustainability was essential for future food security and constituted an important component in the realisation of the right to food. The Special Rapporteur also correctly noted that the participation of farmers was vital for the success of agro ecological practices and the dissemination of knowledge. In closing, the European Union asked the Special Rapporteur on the right to food to explain which role States, donors and researchers could play in improving the access to land, external inputs ad subsidies for women.

KATHARINA ROSE, of Croatian Ombudsman, said that the housing care issue in Croatia, as the consequence of the war and dissolution of the former state, had been the subject of their annual reports to the Parliament for years. Well grounded complaints against complex, non-transparent and long lasting procedures before administrative bodies and courts constituted the majority of the complaints to the Ombudsman in previous years. As the process of reconstruction of houses and restitution of occupied private property was nearing the end, the number of such complaints to the Ombudsman was decreasing accordingly. The Croatian Ombudsman welcomed the recommendations made on behalf of the Special Rapporteur, especially those to close the chapter of the past and to open a new era of adequate housing for all.

ELLEN WALKER, of European Disability Forum, said that the human right to adequate housing was the right of every person to acquire and sustain a home in which to live in dignity, and it formed the base from which the international community had the security to build their lives as the international community chose. However, the reality was that persons with disabilities faced significant barriers in access to adequate housing, as well as to sanitation and water and therefore denied the right to a dignified and independent life. Housing had to be available, affordable and assessable and meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

SAMAR KHAMIS, of Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, said Israel’s housing policies towards Palestinian communities within Israel as well as the Occupied Palestinian Territory demonstrated its apartheid regime. For example, the treatment of the Palestinian housing needs in the Negev Desert where the Israeli authorities systematically rejected the Bedouin villages in its planning and building maps which made all of the buildings and buildings illegal according to Israeli law. Today 90,000 Palestinian Bedouins were forced to live in unrecognized villages. In addition, Area C of the West Bank, which fell under full Israeli military and administrative control, was another illustration of the Israeli apartheid system. Seventy per cent of Area C was classified as inaccessible to the Palestinians. BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency urged the Human Rights Council to stop these practices and to establish legal consequences to Israel’s violation of Palestinian housing rights.

HORACIO RAVENNA, of Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, said the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights recognized the progress made by Argentina on housing beginning in 2004 following 40 years without investment. However, there were still complaints from million Argentineans of the housing deficit made by the housing deficient municipalities. In 2010 in the Indo American Park in Buenos Aires, two confrontations between the police and immigrants resulted in violence. The Special Rapporteur pointed out the special vulnerability that immigrants found themselves in and the Assembly would recommend that affirmative action measures should be undertaken to protect immigrants in relation to housing policy rights.

Mr. A.S. NARANG, of International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, said that a number of Special Rapporteurs had highlighted the global economic and food crisis, particularly the rising prices of food and its non availability to many. According to estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of malnourished individuals rose above the one billion mark in 2009 for the first time in history. Many studies had shown that if the developed world spent just a fraction of the resources it spent on defence, almost all of the world’s hungry could be taken care of. Finally, the International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies pointed out that individuals and groups were not expected to join in the global struggle to preserve human rights if they did not have enough food to feed themselves.

LAZARO PARY, of Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", said the world’s agriculture was dominated by 10 multinational corporations, such as Monsanto and Nestlé, and they held the monopoly over the production and distribution of agricultural goods. At the same time, indigenous peoples continued to be stripped of their ancestral lands and deprived of local resources. What specific measures could the Special Rapporteur propose to control and regulate multinational food corporations from manipulating markets and global food prices.

ZAHRA SHAKUR JAMAL, of Human Rights Advocates said that food aid was the most significant tool in addressing problems of hunger. While the provision of direct food aid had saved thousands of lives in emergency situations, non-strategically delivered food aid continued to significantly undermine food security in recipient States. Food sovereignty, defined as the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced locally through sustainable methods, sought to empower recipients of aid by putting those who produced, distributed and consumed food at the heart of food systems and policies.

TENZIN KAYTA, of Society Threatened Peoples, said that at the 2006 International Conference on Poverty Reduction and the Important Role for International Cooperation in Sichuan Province, international development agencies reported that Tibetan nomads had been coercively removed, excluded from their rangelands and made to settle in rows of houses in rigid lines from the watershed, with no livelihoods, little compensation and nothing to do but watch television. They would like to draw the attention of this Council and in particular the Special Rapporteur on the right to food that on 17 January this year, China’s official Xinhua News agency quoted Mr. Padma Cholingm, Chairman of the Chinese regional movement, as saying that a total of about 300,000 families involving 1.43 million Tibetan nomads and farmers had been moved into new or fixed settlement homes. He further said that some 185,500 families were expected to move into new homes by 2013.

GESANG ZUOMA, of China NGO Network for International Exchange, said as a Tibetan national he was honored to speak and did not need anyone to represent him. He took notice of the Special Rapporteur’s discussion on the right of food and stated that at the eastern part of Tibet there were projects to protect forests and to achieve better agricultural output and grazing and herding. He stressed that though the Network appreciated those in the West who wished to protect Tibetan culture this should not be done by...
maintaining backwardness in society and economic development.

Concluding Remarks

OLIVIER DE SCHUTTER, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, in his concluding remarks, said that he would not touch upon the questions raised about China, as he would be developing a more comprehensive report on the situation. The Special Rapporteur responded to a number of comments regarding the obstacles faced by women worldwide. Women in particular did not have access to credit in many instances because they did not have land to leverage against loans. Moreover, women frequently had less influence in household financial decision making. In terms of tangible measures to help empower women, the Special Rapporteur said that governments and organizations needed to support local women's initiatives and involve women in agricultural processes in order to transform deeply entrenched practices of discrimination on the ground.

The Special Rapporteur also said that farmers needed to be less dependent on external inputs and that this would be more fiscally sustainable for countries in the long run. Sub-Saharan Africa imported close to 95 percent of agro-chemicals, despite the fact that in some cases local alternatives existed. Malawi was a good example of a country that had struck a positive balance between foreign and domestic pesticides. Farmers also needed to be better organised when it came to the sharing and transfer of agricultural knowledge and practices. Moreover, global supply chains needed to reward sustainable farming practices by giving them greater access to regional and international markets.

Mr. de Schutter also mentioned that infrastructure and communication was critical to improving the right to food and said that this was how developed countries could best help agricultural development efforts in developing nations. Finally, regarding the current price hikes in food, countries that were import-dependent would likely suffer the brunt of the worsening food crisis. As just one example, Egypt imported 60 per cent of its wheat. One step proposed by the Special Rapporteur to help stabilise food prices was to curb the incidences of financial speculation, which very often directly and negatively affected the futures markets of certain key agricultural goods.

RAQUEL ROLNIK, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, in her concluding remarks, said that she needed to carry out much more work on the same topics and themes, particularly the issue raised by Zambia on the interplay of different systems of land tenure and how it worked, and the question raised by Finland on how to tackle the question of women and their access to land and the question of international obligations raised by Cuba. These questions needed much more attention to assess what types of interventions were made and to present a better understanding of that. One of the concerns raised by the African Group and the Organization of the Islamic Conference had to do with the difference between post conflict and post disaster situations. Ms. Rolnik said that they often resulted in large scale human displacement, however, this was far more likely in post conflict situations than in post disaster situations. Regarding post-conflict situations, the question of the European Union on how to address the house and land issue in peaceful agreements was crucial because it was important to have redress mechanisms in the peace agreements that dealt very clearly with land. Finally the Special Rapporteur addressed the questions raised by Kazakhstan and Nigeria that referred to settlement in places where the urban plans did not permit it. This dealt with adequate housing when dealing with other types of situations, not only post conflict or post-disaster situations. People who were living in informal settlements did so because they did not have access to adequate housing in formal plans and sometime living in an informal and unauthorized settlements meant not to have access to a number of very important rights. Some informal settlements were even promoted by some authorities. Security of tenure and human rights had to be present including in the case where people lived in informal or non-authorized settlements. The Special Rapporteur thanked all for the questions raised and the suggestions and she would certainly take them in account in her further work.

For use of the information media; not an official record

HRC11/022E

Search Press Releases

Go

Advanced Search

Related Information

24 February 2011 - HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HOLDS SIXTEENTH SESSION FROM 28 FEBRUARY TO 25 MARCH 2011
25 February 2011 - HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL URGES LIBYAN GOVERNMENT TO STOP ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS AND RESPECT THE POPULAR WILL OF THE PEOPLE
17 March 2011 - HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS OUTCOMES OF UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW ON BULGARIA, HONDURAS AND LEBANON
16 March 2011 - HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OUTCOMES ON LIBERIA, MALAWI AND MONGOLIA