PRESS RELEASE

WORLD FOOD DAY IN BRAZIL

UN Special Rapporteur: “Brazil is a leading country on the right to food, tremendous opportunities to do even better”

BRASILIA (16 October 2009) – The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Professor Olivier De Schutter, is currently in Brazil for a country mission on the progressive realization of the right to food. Addressing journalists in Brasilia, he summarized his first conclusions.

“My visit in Brazil is one of the most inspiring I had. Brazil has made so much progress since 2002, yet at the same time deep challenges remain, and persistent pockets of poverty and hunger are unacceptable. Brazil sits on enormous opportunities to accelerate change for the better, if the country commits to reinforce the policies that not only boost food production, but improve the situation of the most vulnerable groups, including small farmers and the landless.”

The Special Rapporteur met with more than one hundred persons during his mission, including Ministers Celso Amorim, Patrus Ananias, and Guilherme Cassel; the Presidents of both Houses of Congress Mr Jose Sarney and Mr Michel Temer, as well as representatives of all food security institutions, in particular CONSEA and CAISAN, and most civil society organizations.

“Any candidate for the next presidential elections should commit to three objectives: strengthen social programmes; accelerate the support to family farming; allocate public resources to productive sustainable agricultural modes of production; and tackle land concentration through agrarian reform”, added De Schutter, knowing his report will be published in an election year. He detailed three core objectives.

“First, the Fome Zero programmes should be enshrined into laws, with adequate earmarked budget, so that they cannot easily be reversed, creating a permanent dynamic of progress and development” said the Prof De Schutter, who attended an international seminar on claim mechanisms. “Claim mechanisms for those who are denied access to such programmes must be improved. Citizens have rights, the State has obligations, and fulfilling these obligations actually creates a very positive effect for a broad socio-economic development.”

Second, the Special Rapporteur observed that family farming is absolutely vital to Brazil’s economy. According to data received, family farming accounts for 70% of food production in Brazil, and it creates more jobs and more value per hectare. “This is what countries need in a time of crisis. The recent law organizing the procurement of a minimum of 30% of school feeding (PNAE) from assentamentos and family farming is actually one of the best levers the Brazilian government has at its disposal to realize the right to food for all”, added the Professor teaching at the University of Louvain in Belgium and Columbia University, USA. “The world is watching this programme, it can’t fail”.

“Third, Brazil should consider stepping at full speed into the best sustainable farming approaches in order to become a holistic and long-term source of inspiration for the world. Indeed, there is a huge untapped potential in innovative agroecological practices, such as agroforestry, and they could be scaled up.”, said the UN expert, who called for a nation-wide participatory assessment of the respective merits of family farming, agroecology and export-led agriculture, including monocultures and agrofuels. Prof De Schutter added that “genuine participation with family farming organizations and social movements will be vital to ensure the potential of agroecology materializes”.

Prof De Schutter thanks the Brazilian government for the support in organizing the mission. He hopes to return to Brazil next year to discuss the implementation of his final recommendations, after his full report will be published.

Annex attached: preliminary conclusions of the Special Rapporteur, including on agrofuels and agrarian reform. Press contacts: 8173-9435. For more on the work of the Special Rapporteur, please visit: www.srfood.org or www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/food/index.htm