“A buffer against more than just hunger” – UN Special Rapporteur welcomes right to food in Rio+20

GENEVA (20 June 2012) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter welcomed the agreement on the Rio+20 Outcome Document. “The negotiators have acknowledged the important contribution human rights, including the right to food, can make to sustainable development.”

“The strong references to the right to food in the outcome document are of special significance,” said the Special Rapporteur. “By encouraging participation and accountability, we design policies that are better informed and more effective, and address the real obstacles people face.”

“The right to food has more than just symbolic value. It works because it is operationalized into laws and policies. It then can provide a buffer against land-grabbing, over-exploitation of natural resources or unregulated investments, or against a form of development that is insufficiently participatory and inclusive,” Mr. De Schutter said.

However, the Special Rapporteur also referred to lessons from meetings he convened recently in Latin America and Africa on the national implementation of the right to food principles in these regions. “We have learned that without strong monitoring systems, human rights can remain a dead letter.” He also referred to the call he made with twenty other UN human rights experts earlier this year in an open letter to States, recalling that sustainable development is impossible without effective implementation of human rights*.

Therefore, the Special Rapporteur said, “We should now focus on improving the global institutional architecture on sustainable development, including the fight against hunger and food insecurity.” A key step towards improved governance for sustainable development, he argued, should be to strengthen the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), where the food insecure are most fully represented.

Noting that the CFS had proven its effectiveness in adopting guidelines on the responsible governance of land, he added: “The CFS could monitor progress on implementing food security as a global goal. And it may take in the future a prominent role in developing a global action plan to fight hunger and develop sustainable food systems, including timelines and allocation of responsibilities.”

* On 16 March, Olivier De Schutter and more than 20 UN rights experts sent an open letter to governments negotiating the Rio+20 Summit, making proposals on how to put accountability at
the heart of Rio+20. Read: “If Rio+20 is to deliver, accountability must be at its heart”: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/OpenLetterRio20.aspx

ENDS

Olivier De Schutter was appointed the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in May 2008 by the UN Human Rights Council. He is independent from any government or organization.

Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur, log on: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/FoodIndex.aspx or www.srfood.org


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