



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council conclusions on Food and Nutrition Security in external assistance

*3241st FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 28 May 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls EU policies on food security, humanitarian food assistance, resilience, social protection¹, policy coherence for development, and other relevant EU policies, and its invitation in May 2010 to the Commission to develop a Communication on nutrition and a food security implementation plan.
2. The present Council Conclusions build on those existing EU policies by endorsing a new EU Policy Framework to enhance maternal and child nutrition in external assistance as well as a new EU Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan.

Introduction

3. The Council is deeply concerned that 870 million people are hungry in the world today, that 100 million children under the age of five are underweight, that 165 million children under five are stunted, that 52 million children are wasted, and that undernutrition causes the deaths of an estimated 2.6 million children every year.²

¹ Doc. 8246/10 and 9653/10; Communication and Council Conclusions on "An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges;" doc. 8250/10 and 9654/10; Communication and Council Conclusions on "Humanitarian Food Assistance;" doc. 14616/12 and 9325/13; Communication and Council Conclusions on "The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises;" doc. 13220/12 and 14538/12; Communication and Council Conclusions on "Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation."

² FAO, *State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2012; UNICEF, WHO & World Bank, *Levels & Trends in Child Malnutrition: Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates*, 2012; UNICEF, *Levels & Trends in Child Mortality*, 2011.

P R E S S

4. The Council is also deeply concerned that some two billion people worldwide are suffering from micronutrient deficiencies³ and recognises that ‘hidden hunger’ poses a major global challenge. It results in increased morbidity and mortality, impaired cognitive development, reduced learning ability and loss of individual potential and economic productivity, imposing a serious economic burden on families, communities and countries.
5. The Council is also concerned by the increasing global prevalence of over-nutrition, obesity and the associated increased incidence of diet-related non-communicable diseases, and the serious consequences for life expectancy and quality, particularly in developing countries facing the double burden of malnutrition and increasing pressures on already over-burdened health systems and economies.
6. The Council emphasises the need to apply a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights, in addressing food and nutrition security, and the need to implement the Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security. The Council recognises every person’s right to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, the right of every child to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, and the imperative of enabling every child to have the best chance in life and to reach their full potential.
7. The Council recalls the target set out in the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger. The Council also recognises the critical importance of nutrition for the achievement of all MDGs, particularly those on child and maternal health. While welcoming the reduction in the global rates of undernourishment between 1990 and 2012, progress in tackling hunger is slow and the MDG hunger target is off-track. The Council emphasises the need to reach and indeed surpass the MDG hunger target, and the need to ensure that hunger, and food and nutrition security, are well reflected in the elaboration of the post-2015 agenda.
8. The Council welcomes the global nutrition targets agreed in 2012 by the World Health Assembly (WHA) including the reduction by 40 percent by 2025 of the number of children under five who are stunted and the reduction of childhood wasting to less than 5 percent. The Council also welcomes the decline in the rates of child stunting between 1990 and 2011, but notes that current trends will still fall significantly short of the WHA target.
9. The Council also welcomes the United Nations Secretary General’s Zero Hunger Challenge, and endorses his vision for a world free from hunger in our lifetime. To this end the Council recalls the EU’s active involvement in international food and nutrition security fora and initiatives, including the Committee on World Food Security as the foremost inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for food and nutrition security, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, the L’Aquila Food Security Initiative, and the 2012 New Alliance partnership to mobilise private sector investment to improve food and nutrition security in Africa. The Council also recalls the EU’s ratification of the new Food Assistance Convention and welcomes its entry into force earlier this year. The Council further recalls the EU’s response to soaring food prices through the EU Food Facility, and the EU’s response to food crises in the Horn of Africa and Sahel through the SHARE and AGIR initiatives.

³ FAO, *State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2012.

10. In order to feed a global population expected to surpass nine billion by 2050, the Council stresses that agricultural production needs to be significantly increased and diversified, particularly in food insecure countries. The Council emphasises the need to boost production in a sustainable and resilient manner, protecting already fragile ecosystems, and ensuring the sustainable use of, and access to, natural resources, in particular land, water, fisheries and forests.
11. To this end, the Council emphasises the need to facilitate and support responsible private sector investment in agriculture, including by smallholder farmers themselves, and the need for an enabling environment for such responsible investment and business. Minimising harvest losses and food waste, both up and down stream in the food chain, is also a prerequisite to achieving food and nutrition security. The Council recognises the importance of shorter food chains and local channels of distribution which are more environmentally friendly and which contribute to a lower carbon footprint.
12. The Council stresses that good governance for food and nutrition security at all levels is essential, and that coherence between policies should be pursued in cases of negative effects on food and nutrition security. The Council emphasises in particular the governance and security of land tenure and use rights. The Council welcomes the adoption by the Committee on World Food Security last year of Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, and encourages countries to implement them.
13. Recognising not only that women are severely affected by undernutrition throughout their lives as infants, children, during pregnancy and as mothers, but also that women are key drivers of positive change in the fight against food and nutrition insecurity, the Council emphasises the need to mainstream gender equality into all hunger reduction and nutrition efforts.
14. The Council also stresses the need to empower women and strengthen their decision-making role over their lives and reproductive health, and in their households, including in relation to decisions about food production, consumption and the use of household assets. The Council further stresses the need to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups are given equal opportunities to boost their agricultural productivity sustainably in order to meet the food and nutritional needs of their families and to increase their incomes, including through improved access to land, affordable credit, improved farm inputs, extension services, training and agricultural research and technologies.
15. Excessively volatile and high food prices continue to seriously affect poor people's access to nutritious food at affordable prices. The Council emphasises the need to mitigate the exposure of vulnerable populations through enhancing employment and income-earning opportunities in both urban and rural areas, including in the agricultural sector, enhancing social protection programmes, and supporting resilient sustainable local food production systems. The need to improve infrastructure and links to markets is also critical to ensure access to food. The Council also highlights the need to address the root causes of excessive food price volatility, including through enhancing food market transparency and concerted actions at international level through the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS).

16. The Council recognises that, in addition to conflicts, protracted crises, and natural and man-made disasters, climate change and environmental degradation are also increasing the risk of hunger and undernutrition. While emphasising the importance of reducing the negative impacts of agriculture on the environment, the Council also recognises the importance of assisting partner countries to address climate change and its effects on food and nutrition security and agricultural development. In this regard the Council emphasises the need to support smallholder farmers, in particular women and family farmers, as well as pastoralists and other small-scale producers, to enhance their resilience against climate shocks, seasonal variations, and other recurrent crises.
17. The Council also emphasises the need to build the resilience of entire vulnerable communities and marginalised groups prone to food and nutrition crises, stresses the need to address the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity, and calls upon development and humanitarian actors to work closely together in this regard. In line with the EU Approach to Resilience, the Council further emphasises the need to increase support for longer-term programmes which assist food insecure partner countries to anticipate, prevent, prepare for and manage food security crises. The Council also emphasises the need to assist countries and regions prone to food and nutrition crises to develop effective early-warning information systems.
18. While emphasising that it is the primary responsibility of partner countries to tackle national food and nutrition insecurity, the Council recognises that a multi-partner approach by all stakeholders, including the private sector, is necessary in both emergency and non-emergency contexts, with partners working in a coordinated manner, in accordance with international aid effectiveness principles, humanitarian principles, and, as appropriate, within the Framework of the Transformative Agenda.

Communication on Nutrition

19. In this context, the Council welcomes the Commission Communication on “Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition in External Assistance: An EU Policy Framework”⁴ and the Commission’s Staff Working Document on “Undernutrition in Emergencies.”⁵
20. The Council endorses the objectives and strategic priorities of the Communication, focusing on addressing maternal and child undernutrition in both development and humanitarian contexts, reducing child stunting and wasting, and contributing to the achievement of the WHA targets.
21. The Council emphasises in particular the need to focus on maternal and child undernutrition in the 1,000 day window of opportunity (from pregnancy to the age of two) to combat the irreversible effects of chronic undernutrition in early childhood. It is, in this context, also essential to raise awareness of the longer-term impact of undernutrition in children and to address acute malnutrition, particularly in children, through both humanitarian and development action.

⁴ Doc. 7521/13.

⁵ Doc. 7521/13 ADD 1.

22. The Council recognises that increased political commitment by governments in countries with high burdens of undernutrition is essential, and welcomes the leadership and ownership by those countries which have joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The Council encourages the EU and its Member States to actively engage in the SUN Movement at global and country level and asks Member States to consider taking on the role of donor convenor in SUN countries.
23. The Council emphasises the need to strengthen human and institutional capacity, knowledge and expertise on nutrition in partner countries and in relevant national, international and civil society organisations. In particular, the Council encourages the EU and its Member States to invest more in nutrition research, nutrition education and health education, as well as to identify delivery mechanisms to bring proven interventions to scale nation-wide, including through public-private partnerships.
24. The Council encourages the EU and its Member States to increase financial support to partner countries with high burdens of undernutrition to implement national plans to scale-up proven nutrition interventions, direct and sensitive, in development and humanitarian settings.
25. The Council encourages the EU and its Member States to support partner countries to adopt a multi-sector approach that integrates nutrition across national sector policies, as well as in national budgetary processes and in the business community, in order to ensure that progress is sustained.
26. The Council emphasises the need to strengthen mutual accountability for nutrition results. The EU and MS active in nutrition in their external assistance programmes should hold themselves accountable, transparently communicate and track effectively, on an annual basis, expenditure on nutrition interventions, including through the common methodology on nutrition sensitive and direct interventions currently under development by SUN donors. In addition to tracking expenditure, the Council also emphasises the need to monitor the impact of and measure the results achieved by these interventions.
27. The Council welcomes the Commission's target of reducing by 2025 the number of children under five who are stunted by 7 million, and encourages Member States to also contribute to the achievement of the WHA stunting target. The Council invites the Commission to develop, by the first half of 2014, an Action Plan setting out how the Commission will deliver on its stunting target.

EU Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan

28. The Council endorses the Commission Staff Working Document on “Boosting Food and Nutrition Security through EU Action: Implementing our Commitments” (Implementation Plan).⁶ The Council supports its objective of defining an EU operational response, over the period from 2014 to 2020, to deliver on the commitments set out in the 2010 EU Food Security Policy, the Nutrition Communication, and other relevant EU policy documents. In this regard the Council emphasises the need to enhance coordination, complementarity and coherence within and between EU and Member States' external assistance programmes.

⁶ Doc. 8107/13.

29. The Council also supports the three-strand approach presented in the Implementation Plan:
- enhancing political and policy dialogue on food and nutrition security with partner countries, regional and global organisations and initiatives, civil society and the private sector;
 - enhancing synergies between their programmes, including through joint programmes and joint programming where feasible;
 - identifying interventions to engage in jointly or in accordance with division of labour.
30. The Council endorses the interventions proposed in the Implementation Plan as well as the proposal that the Commission and Member States issue biennial progress reports on the interventions they are undertaking. The Council also encourages Member States to share lessons learnt from these interventions. The Council invites the Commission to coordinate, in close collaboration with Member States, a consolidated EU biennial progress report and to publish the first such report in 2014.

EU Food Facility

31. The Council recalls the establishment in late 2008 of the EU Food Facility, welcomes the publication of the Final Report⁷ and notes its main findings and recommendations.
32. The Council welcomes the results and impact of the EU Food Facility and notes that it successfully reached 59 million direct beneficiaries with spill over effects on an additional 93 million indirect beneficiaries, mainly smallholders, in 49 countries. The Council notes that the main objective to rapidly address the consequences of the food price crisis, rather than its causes, was reached but encourages the EU to promote and support longer term programmes to enhance resilience and improve food and nutrition security.
33. The Council in particular welcomes the findings that the Commission and EU Delegations managed the Facility effectively and efficiently, and that its creation helped to bring agricultural development and food and nutrition security to the forefront of the EU's development agenda, strengthening its leading role in the international response to the 2008 food price crisis. "

⁷ Doc. 8541/13: "Final Report on the implementation of the EU Food Facility."