

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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MESSAGE ON WORLD FOOD DAY**New York, 16 October 2008**

This year's World Food Day comes at a time of crisis. Global financial turmoil is exacerbating concerns about rising food and fuel costs, which have already driven 75 million people deeper into the abyss of hunger and poverty.

This colossal human tragedy is unfolding as we fight to keep the promise made in the first Millennium Development Goal: to reduce hunger and poverty by half by the year 2015. The situation would be alarming enough if it were confined to a matter of hunger, but a widespread lack of food triggers other threats, from social unrest to environmental degradation, while undermining the wellbeing of an entire generation on whom the world will depend in the future.

Even before prices started rising, eight hundred million people were going to sleep hungry every night. At the same time, the effects of climate change, including increased exposure to drought, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather events, threatened to confront millions more with malnutrition and water shortages. And now, with energy costs rising and the price of food having more than doubled in the past year alone, an additional 100 million people could be pushed into hunger and poverty.

These critical challenges to our shared humanity – addressing climate change, and responding to the global food and energy crisis – are interrelated and global in nature. And so they require a global response. These crises are not short-term, and will therefore require the sustained attention of governments, donors, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector for years to come.

Aware of the magnitude and complexities of this problem, the United Nations set up a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis which put together a Comprehensive Framework for Action to chart the way forward for governments, the donor community, civil society and the private sector.

World Food Day is an opportunity to build on this momentum by exploring its theme of climate change and bio-energy in the context of global food security.

These are life-and-death matters that we must confront with serious thought and resolute action. On this World Food Day, I urge Governments, organizations and citizens to forge meaningful partnerships to overcome these challenges so that we can meet all of our Millennium Development Goals and, ultimately, usher in a world free of hunger and poverty.