

Global Goals on poverty and hunger require \$265 billion annually – UN conference told

26 January 2017 – The world must take urgent action to mobilise the estimated \$265 billion a year needed to achieve the first two Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty and hunger by 2030, the head of the United Nations agency for financing rural development projects has told an international conference.

“The need is urgent,” Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said at last night’s opening of a conference, titled “Investing in inclusive rural transformation: innovative approaches to financing,” held in Rome, Italy on 26-27 January.

“Despite decades of commitments and considerable effort to end poverty and hunger, nearly 800 million children, women and men still go hungry every day, and an almost equal number live in extreme poverty,” he added, stressing the need to be more creative in using public resources and mobilise financing.

He also emphasized the need to make it easier for the private sector and philanthropists to invest in rural areas, where rates of poverty and hunger are highest.

Speakers agreed it cannot be left up to governments alone. In 2015, Official Development Assistance (ODA) was approximately \$192 billion and only \$9 billion of that was earmarked for agriculture.

The conference comes at a critical time with political changes and humanitarian crises – such as war, migration and natural disasters – reshaping global priorities and potentially diverting money away from development.

The majority of these poor and hungry people live in rural areas of developing countries. Investments need to be targeted to transform rural areas into vibrant places that offer all people the opportunity to have decent jobs and lead dignified lives free of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Nwanze stressed that the financing needs for development are enormous, but so are the opportunities. “Agri-food is already a \$5 trillion sector, and it is growing,” he said. “It holds tremendous promise for the private sector and for producers in developing countries.”

Co-organised by IFAD, the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Brookings Institution and the University of Warwick, the conference brings together development agencies, governments, philanthropic organisations, the

private sector, academia and farmers' organisations to look at innovative ways to mobilise money and smarter ways to spend it.

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, it has provided about \$18 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached some 462 million people.

Latin America and the Caribbean can make hunger history – UN agricultural agency

25 January 2017 – With continued and strengthened implementation of a regional food security plan, Latin America and the Caribbean could become the first developing region to completely eradicate hunger, the head of United Nations agricultural agency said today.

“This region has all the necessary conditions to achieve this, starting with the great political commitment that sustains the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication Plan,” said the Director-General of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), José Graziano da Silva.

Speaking at the Summit of Presidents and Heads of State and Government of CELAC in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic, the FAO chief added: “The Plan represents the crystallization of governments' political will to eradicate hunger before 2025 (five years ahead the target set in the Sustainable Development Goals).”

Approved by CELAC in 2015, the Plan promotes comprehensive public policies to reduce poverty, improve rural conditions, adapt agriculture to climate change, end food waste and mitigate disaster risks.

A key element of the Plan is that it not only focuses on addressing hunger but also obesity, which affects about 140 million people in the region.

According to the FAO, the Plan is also fully in line level global commitments including the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Strengthening family farming to tackle climate change

Mr. Graziano da Silva also highlighted the threats posed by climate change, which has the potential to reverse the gains made in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty in the region.

“Agriculture is the sector most affected by climate change and its main victims are small family farmers, men and women, many of whom struggle daily for their survival,” he noted.

Together with CELAC, FAO is developing a plan of action for family agriculture and rural territorial development that promotes sustainable intensification of production, public procurement and food supply systems, rural services and greater opportunities for rural youth.

FAO has also supported the countries of the region to draw up a Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for Agriculture and Food Security, which promotes resilience and adaptation of farmers through s

ustainable farming techniques and resource management.

Link between peace, food security and sustainable development

Noting the links between peace, food security and sustainable development, the FAO head recalled the peace process in Colombia and added that it showed the interconnectedness of the issues.

“There will be no social stability or peace as long as there is hunger, poverty and inequality. Nor can we move forward if we continue to exploit our natural resources. Sustainability is a pre-condition for development,” he noted.

Sustainable agriculture, better-managed water supplies, vital to tackling water-food nexus – UN

25 January 2017 – Highlighting the challenges associated with the inextricable links between water and food – the so-called ‘water-food nexus’ – for food security, as well as for sustainable development, the United Nations agricultural agency today outlined steps that can be taken to improve water sustainability for current and future needs.

“The magnitude of the water-food nexus is underappreciated,” said Pasquale Steduto, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Regional Strategic Programme Coordinator for the Near East and North Africa regions.

In his briefing during an event at UN Headquarters in New York, the FAO official also pointed to the fact that a person needs between two to four litres of water for daily consumption, and for domestic uses (washing, etc.) between 40 to 400 litres per family.

But for food and nutritional needs, the requirement is between 2,000 and 5,000 litres per person, depending on diet, or “roughly one litre per kilocalorie” he explained.

He further emphasized that the nexus is particularly significant for strengthening food security given that the world population is estimated to cross the nine billion mark by 2050, another 50-60 per cent food would need to be produced over current levels to feed everyone.

“This would imply having at least 50 per cent more water – which we will not have. Estimates show we can mobilize up to 10 per cent more, [highlighting] the issue of water scarcity,” added Mr. Steduto.

He also stressed the significance of water for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) explicitly calls for ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, water is a key component for other Goals including those on poverty (SDG 1), hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2), and climate change (SDG 13).

Thus, highlighting the need for intensification of sustainable agriculture, Mr. Steduto called for improving efficiency in the use of resources; protecting and conserving natural resources; having a people-centred approach and protecting rural livelihoods; strengthening resilience of people, community and ecosystems, particularly to climate change; and ensuring good governance to safeguard sustainability for natural and human systems.

Speaking further on the response to tackling water scarcity, the FAO official emphasized the need to augment the availability of water, such as through employing large-scale water harvesting methods (including for agricultural purposes), as well as the use of non-conventional water (such as treated waste water and desalination plants).

He also underlined the need to be prudential on the demand side, such as reducing food losses and food waste, and promoting sustainable diets, could also go a long way in staving off water scarcity.

Between supply and demand, he outlined enhancing efficiency and productivity, strengthening governance, employing water saving and optimization technologies, as well as strategic planning and policy for water and food security, including the water-food-energy nexus approach, are important components of addressing this complex challenge.

In his briefing, he also noted FAO initiatives tackling water scarcity at various levels.

Enhancing regional partnerships among top priorities for UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2017

25 January 2017 – Strengthening the United Nation’s partnerships with the African Union, empowering women and youth, and greater cooperation with the World Bank will be among the key priorities this year for the UN Peacebuilding Commission, its new chair today said.

Outlining the intergovernmental advisory board’s objectives, Cho Tae-yul, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN, told journalists in New York that he is “very much encouraged” by the enthusiasm among Member States for great international cooperation which “bodes very well for the Peacebuilding Commission.”

He detailed a number of priorities, including building on progress achieved in strengthening partnerships with regional and sub-regional groups.

“They are better poised to understand the root causes,” Mr. Cho said, adding that he is personally in support of stronger regional cooperation, particularly in Africa, where all six of the countries currently on the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) agenda are located. Those countries are: Burundi; Sierra Leone; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Liberia; and Central African Republic.

In addition to country-specific work, the Commission also works thematically, on issues such as institution building, and enhancing the participation of women and youth.

The PBC will also this year continue to work on becoming a “more transparent, accountable and flexible body” through the use of new working methods. A number of new improvements were introduced just this morning, Mr. Cho said.

Created in 2005, the PBC supports a country through all stages of a conflict, including post-conflict recovery and socio-economic development. It sits between the UN Security Council, whose 15 members are primarily tasked with maintaining peace and security in the world; the General Assembly, whose membership includes all 193 Member States; and the Economic and Social Council, or ECOSOC, which works with the 14 specialized UN agencies.

It works closely with regional bodies such as the African Union, European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and representatives from the countries who are the top financial and troop contributors to the UN, as well as from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Increased financial support for the Peacebuilding Fund, which has allocated \$623 million since its creation at the end of 2015, is also a key priority for the year. Mr. Cho said that he has “started preliminary dialogue” with

the World Bank to see how to secure the targeted annual figure of \$100 million.

He is also working to “enhance the Fund through strategic partnerships” with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners.

The *UN News Centre* highlighted the work of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund in a feature series this past August. Travel with us to Mali to see how the Fund is helping communities come back together after war.

[UN, NYC Mayor’s office team up to promote Global Goals’ mental health targets](#)

25 January 2017 – Addressing an event on mental health, a special advisor to the President of the United Nations General Assembly today stressed the importance of mental health for all actions to be taken to achieve sustainable development goals.

“All actions start with good health,” Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, told an event titled ‘Mental Health for All: Local Strategies,’ organized by the New York City Mayor’s Office for International Affairs and its cosponsors, including the World Health Organization (WHO).

She said that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by UN Member States in September 2015, are all interlinked, and noted that Goal 3 addresses mental health.

“We all know that the SDGs are indivisible,” she continued, explaining that, for example, education has an impact on skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, and in this way can help change production and consumption behaviours and patterns.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly, she said, is raising awareness of all the SDGs.

She noted that Assembly President Peter Thomson had sent a letter to all Heads of Government, urging them to support teaching about the SGDs. The Office was represented at the World Innovation Summit for Health, held in Doha, Qatar, last year, and which featured some 1,400 health professionals examining a report on healthy populations.



Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable

Development Goals, addresses at UN Headquarters an event titled 'Mental Health for All: Local Strategies.' UN Photo/Evan Schneider

The Office is also raising the awareness of the need for universal healthcare and universal health care coverage by setting aside 12 December to mark the Universal Healthcare Coverage Day.

While applauding New York City's local initiative on mental health, Ms. Dessima stressed the worldwide need to end the stigma surrounding mental health and to convey the importance of early attention for good mental health "as a good in itself and as a conduit to a life worth living."

Also addressing the event were Chirlane McCray, First Lady of New York City, Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, and Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor of New York City for Strategic Policy Initiatives.

The event also included a panel discussion on NYC's initiative, "ThriveNYC: Local roadmap to mental health."