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Subject: Thoughts on the World Food Summit

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**Editor's Note: This week two viewpoints on the recently concluded World Food Summit are presented. ActionAid and Via Campesina are two important organizations with different criticisms of the summit, which most observers view as a "missed opportunity."**

2009-11-19

**G8 countries show total lack of political will to address the global food crisis**

Via Campesina

The blatant absence of the heads of states of the G8 countries in the World Food Summit, held in Rome from 16 to 18th of November was one of the key causes of the total failure of this summit. There were no concrete measures taken to eradicate hunger, to stop food speculation or to stop the expansion of agrofuels. There were no measures to stop the devastating effects of corporate agriculture or to support domestic peasant based food production.

The summit did not take up the challenge of a radical, desperately needed change in food and agricultural policies, guaranteeing the access and control of the peasants and small scale farmers over production resources through agrarian reform. The absence of the G8 heads of state shows an enormous lack of responsibility to resolve this deepening hunger crisis.

La Via Campesina demands increasing investment in public policies based on food sovereignty that promotes small scale sustainable farming and food production. Priority should be given to support those who produce food in a sustainable way for the local communities instead of favoring export crops, agrofuels or technologies such as GMOs pushed by transnational corporations. Agriculture should be taken out of any free trade agreement in order to enable countries to effectively protect their free domestic food production.

La Via Campesina strongly supports the reformed FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Contrary to the mechanisms set up outside the UN system, it at least respects the basic rule of democracy, the principle of "one country one vote" and gives a new space to Civil Society. All funds made available to support solutions for the food crisis should be allocated under the responsibility of the renewed CFS. But instead giving their full support to the reformed CFS, the G8 countries are opting to set up a trust fund under the World Bank. A proposal from the World Bank suggests that the use of these funds be decided by a donor

committee composed of the donor countries, the coordinator of the High Level Task Force and the managing director of the World Bank. In practice this means that two bureaucrats along the donor countries will decide where the money goes. This is a scandalous lack of transparency and democracy and totally opposite to the rhetoric of the High Level Task Force and the World Bank on these issues.

In general the policies of the World Bank, together with the WTO and the IMF, have contributed in a major way to the destruction of food security at a global level. We cannot expect these institutions to be the ones that will put forward the solutions.

La Via Campesina holds that it is time that these institutions recognize their enormous failures and leave the task to others. La Via Campesina and many other social movements and NGOs have are proposing solutions and will be actors in this crucial process of change. We demand that our governments allow our full participation in the definition of policies and we expect their full support for this process. They must commit themselves to implement effective policies to eradicate hunger in our societies as quickly as possible.

(Rome, 18 November 2009)

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### **World Food Summit failure condemned ActionAid UK**

World Food Summit throws away chance to stop one billion going hungry

The UN World Food Summit threw away a great chance to stop more than one billion people going hungry.

“You would think that the 20 per cent jump in the number of hungry since 2005, would spur determined and decisive action. But the World Food Summit failed to make any major breakthroughs. And the G8 leaders didn’t even bother turning up. Warm words don’t fill empty stomachs,” said Adriano Campolina, ActionAid’s Regional Director for Latin America.

One of the biggest issues left untackled was the challenge of food security and agriculture while the reformed UN Committee on Food Security is still without sufficient funds, risking it becoming just a talking shop.

Smallholder farmers in developing countries are still vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change as no signals were sent to Copenhagen to provide ADDITIONAL resources to help them adapt.

“The World Food Summit announced the need to increase production by 70 per cent in order to feed growing populations of up to 9 billion by 2050 through bio-technology,” said Francisco Sarmiento, ActionAid’s head of food rights.

“But we need to fundamentally re-think the way we grow food if we are to sustain people and the planet in future.

“Evidence shows that supporting small family farms with ecologically sound farming practices is the way forward. Agriculture is currently contributing to around 30% of climate change emissions and is degrading the environment. Something needs to change – and fast.”

The summit offered more of the same – with increased use of 'biotechnology'. “World leaders have overlooked the opportunity to follow more sustainable options helping to mitigate climate change and feed the world,” said Sarmiento.

“Governments should have declared that any climate change agreement in Copenhagen should commit resources IN ADDITION to existing aid budgets to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change.”

Meanwhile in the last seven days, nearly 180,000 citizens from around the world have signed a joint Avaaz-ActionAid petition calling on G8 governments to deliver, in full, the \$20 billion developing country agriculture and food security package pledged last July.

On World Food Day, hundreds of thousands of people rallied across 25 countries, with ActionAid demanding that governments 'free the billion hungry people' and take action at the World Food Summit. L'Aquila was a welcome step in the right direction but there must now be a timetable for disbursement, ensuring the pledge is delivered in full, with genuinely new funds.

President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, announcing this week that one fifth of the G8 money would come from the EC, failed to mention that any of it was new,” said Francisco Sarmiento, ActionAid’s Head of Food Rights.

“His pledge was a repackaging of existing commitments, such as funds from the one billion euro food facility approved last December, the food security thematic programme and the European Development Fund.”

ENDS

ActionAid is an international anti-poverty agency working in over forty countries taking sides with poor people to end poverty and injustice together. ActionAid’s HungerFREE campaign calls on governments to deliver on their commitment to halve world hunger by 2015. [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

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collaboration with Wayne Roberts of the Toronto Food Policy Council. To  
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