

Media Update

29 May 2015

EU/UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

EU/UNDP Joint Statement On Allegations of Women Being Barred From Voting in KP local Government Elections

29 May, 2015, Islamabad: According to recent media reports, candidates, community elders and religious leaders in some constituencies are preventing women from voting in the local government elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which are scheduled to take place on Saturday 30 May.

The European Union Delegation and EU Member States, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), call on the Government of Pakistan, the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the leaders of political parties to investigate these allegations and to take all steps necessary to ensure that women are allowed to participate fully in the elections.

This is in line with a recommendation by the European Union Observer Mission to the May 2013 General Elections which called for “...Resolute actions to be taken against agreements that prohibit women from voting.” The Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform should recommend appropriate legislative measures to ensure effective legal sanctions against such activities in future.

We call on the Government of Pakistan, as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to honour its commitment under these agreements and to safeguard the basic rights of women and to ensure that barriers are removed which prevent women from

exercising their democratic right to participate in elections and cast their ballots for candidates of their choice.

We look forward to continue our cooperation with the Pakistani Government, as part of the electoral reform process, to promote the participation of women in elections.

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FAO

PRESS RELEASE

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015 Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress

27 May 2015, Rome/ Islamabad: The number of hungry people in the world has dropped to 795 million – 216 million fewer than in 1990-92 – or around one person out of every nine, according to the latest edition of the annual UN hunger report (The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015 - SOFI).

In the developing regions, the prevalence of undernourishment - which measures the proportion of people who are unable to consume enough food for an active and healthy life – has declined to 12.9 percent of the population, down from 23.3 percent a quarter of a century ago reports SOFI 2015, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

A majority – 72 out of 129 – of the countries monitored by FAO have achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the prevalence of undernourishment by 2015, with developing regions as a whole missing the target by a small margin. In addition, 29 countries have met the more

ambitious goal laid out at the World Food Summit in 1996, when governments committed to halving the absolute number of undernourished people by 2015.

The people in the Asia and the Pacific region are found to suffer significant micronutrient (iron-which often plays a role in anaemia), vitamin A and iodine deficiencies. The most recent data indicate that all countries in South-Eastern Asia and Southern Asia have a high incidence of anaemia among pregnant women and children. Prevalence of anaemia among children under five is often higher than among women. It ranged from 30 percent (Maldives) to 61 percent (Pakistan). In Southern Asia, the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency (VAD) in the population is very high in India (62 percent in 2003) and moderately high in Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka (above 30 percent). Pakistan has over 20 percent iodine deficiency along with India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Although the region has already achieved the MDG-1 target for halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, over 20 percent of the people still live in extreme poverty in a number of countries, including countries with large populations (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) and those with smaller populations (e.g. Lao PDR and Nepal).

"The near-achievement of the MDG hunger targets shows us that we can indeed eliminate the scourge of hunger in our lifetime. We must be the Zero Hunger generation. That goal should be mainstreamed into all policy interventions and at the heart of the new sustainable development agenda to be established this year," said FAO Director General José Graziano da Silva.

"If we truly wish to create a world free from poverty and hunger, then we must make it a priority to invest in the rural areas of developing countries where most of the world's poorest and hungriest people live," said IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze. "We must work to create a transformation in our rural communities so they provide decent jobs, decent conditions and decent opportunities. We must invest in rural areas so that our nations can have balanced growth and so that the three billion people who live in rural areas can fulfil their potential."

"Men, women and children need nutritious food every day to have any chance of a free and prosperous future. Healthy bodies and minds are fundamental to both individual and economic growth, and that growth must be inclusive for us to make hunger history," said WFP Executive Director Ertharin Cousin.

FAO Representative to Pakistan, Patrick T. Evans said “FAO has been active in Pakistan since 1947 and had helped Pakistan over the years to strengthen agriculture, livestock and fisheries production in the country. More efforts are needed to increase the contribution of the Pakistani agriculture sector to GDP with value addition and expansion of exports to eliminate hunger, provide food security and better livelihoods”.

Striking advances, given challenging environment

Progress towards fully achieving the 2015 food security targets was hampered in recent years by challenging global economic conditions.

Extreme weather events, natural disasters, political instability and civil strife have all impeded progress, around one of every five of the world's undernourished lives in crisis environments characterized by weak governance and acute vulnerability to death and disease.

SOFI 2015 notes that over the past 30 years crises have evolved from catastrophic, short-term, acute and highly visible events to protracted situations, due to a combination of factors, especially natural disasters and conflicts, with climate change, financial and price crises frequently among the exacerbating factors.

Yet, alongside these challenges, the world population has grown by 1.9 billion since 1990, making reductions of the number of hungry people all the more striking, the report says.

Lessons from the MDGs experience

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for how to improve food security, the SOFI report outlines several factors that played a critical role in achieving the hunger target.

First, improved agricultural productivity, especially by small and family farmers, leads to important gains in hunger and poverty reduction. High performers on that front in Africa met the MDG hunger target while those that made slower progress did not.

Second, while economic growth is always beneficial, not least because it expands the fiscal revenue base necessary to fund social transfers and other assistance programmes, it needs to be inclusive to help reduce hunger. Inclusive growth provides a proven avenue for those with fewer assets and skills in boosting their incomes, and providing them the resilience they need

to weather natural and man-made shocks. Raising the productivity of family farmers is an effective way out of poverty and hunger.

Third, the expansion of social protection – often cash transfers to vulnerable households, but also food vouchers, health insurance or school meal programs, perhaps linked to guaranteed procurement contracts with local farmers – correlated strongly with progress in hunger reduction and in assuring that all members of society have the healthy nutrition to pursue productive lives.

Some 150 million people worldwide are prevented from falling into extreme poverty thanks to social protection, according to SOFI – but more than two-thirds of the world's poor still do not have access to regular and predictable forms of social support. Transfers help households manage risk and mitigate shocks that would otherwise leave them trapped in poverty and hunger.

The full State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015 report is available online <http://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>

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WFP

NEWS RELEASE

Pakistan Contributes Wheat Worth US\$34 Million to WFP for Displaced People and Returnees

ISLAMABAD – On 27 May 2015, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar approved the immediate release of 85,000 metric tons of wheat to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) urgently required to provide food assistance to people temporarily displaced from FATA as well as to those who have recently returned.

According to the Minister, SAFRON, the number of displaced families has reached 260,000 since law enforcement operations in the country's north-west began almost a year ago.

Having made locally available 455,000 mt worth US\$177 million in in-kind wheat (9.1 million 50 kg bags) to WFP since 2013, the Government of Pakistan ranks first as host government donor to WFP worldwide, the second largest donor to WFP in the country, after the US, and the 19th donor to WFP operations in the world.

“The recent donation of 85,000 metric tons, completing the 155,000 metric ton contribution pledged by the Government for 2015, came very timely in order to secure distributions of food to the displaced and returnee families from June to September,” said WFP Representative in Pakistan Lola Castro. “We greatly value the excellent partnership WFP has with the Government which gives us an opportunity to contribute towards the resettlement of the returnees in FATA while also expanding the current livelihoods, nutrition and education activities as required for the recovery period.”

International donors, namely USAID, Australia, Japan, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, Korea as well as the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, have generously been contributing funds to cover the associated costs of milling, fortification, transportation and distribution of the wheat which is being provided in the form of relief food assistance as well as for livelihoods rehabilitation in FATA.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food in emergencies and working with communities to build resilience. In 2013, WFP assisted more than 80 million people in 75 countries.

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