



United Nations System
Standing Committee on Nutrition

Highlights from the 32nd Session Brasilia 14-18 March 2005

The 32nd SCN Session recently held in Brasilia was acclaimed by many to have been one of the best ever. It was certainly the largest, with upward of 1100 participants. All plenary and international sessions had simultaneous translation into English, Spanish and Portuguese and were also webcast globally via internet.

The challenge now for the SCN is to be able to mobilize the support needed to be able to meet all the important demands and challenges developed during the Session. At the recent UN Chief Executives Board meeting, SCN Chair Catherine Bertini called upon the heads of agencies to continue to be fully supportive of these efforts and to work collaboratively through the SCN in pursuit of this common goal.

Building on the results of the recent 32nd Session, the SCN is now organizing a three hour high level (Minister/UN agency head level) panel at ECOSOC on 7 June in preparation for the September Millennium Summit +5 meeting at the UN General Assembly. The panel will focus on the importance of food and nutrition interventions for achieving the MDGs, and will draw on the results of the Symposium in Brasilia.

The focus of the 32nd Session Symposium on "*Realizing the Right to Adequate Food to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals*" was particularly important. It featured the results of case studies carried out in Brazil, Angola, Bolivia and Mozambique, which looked at how to strengthen the food and nutrition aspects of national development plans, in order to achieve the MDGs.

The case studies revealed the importance of promoting both food and nutrition security in order to improve programme effectiveness as well as to reduce the risks of increasing the double burden of disease. Both overweight and underweight are now affecting even the poorest of nations such as Mozambique. All four countries face a lack of common understanding around concepts and definitions of hunger and malnutrition. Although the institutional and legal frameworks for realizing the right to adequate food are best developed in Brazil, there is still a lack of clear definition and understanding of the content of the right at the national level, and clear justiciable provisions on the right to adequate food at the district and community level are still a long way from reality. **One important outcome of this work is that a food and nutrition policy framework was proposed to help organize and define the food and nutrition substantive area, considered as an essential first step for any future attempts to realize the right to adequate food and accelerate the achievement of the MDGs.**

At the closing session of the 32nd Session, representatives of Angola, Bolivia, Brazil and Mozambique signed a [joint declaration](#) in which they affirmed the importance of the Country Case Studies for analysing the food and nutrition security dimensions of their national development plans, and their agreement to work together to try to implement the Case Study recommendations. In order to accomplish the objectives of the joint declaration **the signatories requested that the SCN and the agencies involved in food and nutrition at the county level, to provide all necessary support.**

The SCN 32nd Session further endorsed the three broad areas of activity proposed in the SCN Action Plan: Advocacy, Communications, and Partnership Building; Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation; Development of Integrated Approaches. **There was special endorsement for the need for a system wide effort to develop a common understanding on what hunger and malnutrition mean, and for the SCN to mobilize all agencies to support the realization of the right to adequate food and the newly adopted Voluntary Guidelines.**