



ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting

Panel on Climate change and Nutrition

20 April 2017 (10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)

ECOSOC Chamber

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing our world. It is warming the planet, altering weather patterns, increasing the intensity of weather related events and is undermining development gains. Climate change impacts people's lives and intervenes in all socio-economic spheres. The inextricable linkages between climate change and sustainable development in all its dimensions - environmental, economic, social - have been recognized as early as 1992 during the Rio Earth Summit. This recognition continues to gather strength in light of the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Finance and Development Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, which builds upon the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016 and, as of 13 February 2017, 131 Parties had ratified the Convention.

Many countries have already taken mitigation and adaptation measures to confront the impacts of climate change. Addressing climate change, however, requires an integrated and coherent approach to minimize the trade-offs. To this end, the Paris Agreement "[recognizes] the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems in the adverse impacts of climate change". The Agreement also aims to "increas[e] the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production".

At the same time the importance of nutrition was acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by dedicating SDG2 to ending hunger, achieving food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture. The proclamation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) further emphasised the level of urgency: As of 2015, around 795 million people worldwide remained hungry, one out of three people are suffering from one or several forms of malnutrition leaving no country immune. The prevalence of

undernourishment is around 12.9 per cent, with high levels in Africa (20 per cent)¹ and around 2 billion people experience micronutrient deficiency. Worldwide over 1.9 billion adults are overweight, 600 million obese, leading to a rise in non-communicable diseases. According to FAO, the cost of malnutrition is around 3.5 trillion USD per year.²

Nutrition is a cross-sectoral issue that goes beyond simply having enough food; among others, it is related to health, education, sanitation and hygiene, access to resources, as well as women's empowerment and social protection. Food systems are a major determinant of nutrition outcomes. Climate change, aggravates already existing problems by increasing the risk of extreme weather-related natural disasters, jeopardizing livelihoods, adversely impacts on agricultural activities, access to adequate food, clean water and sanitary conditions, which are all essential for good nutrition. FAO warns that unless action on climate change is taken, 35 to 122 million people could fall into poverty due to its negative impact on incomes in the agricultural sector.³ Furthermore, the world's poorest nations and the most vulnerable segments of the population (particularly women), which contribute least to rising CO2 levels, are also least equipped to deal with the consequences. Every woman, man and child has right to adequate food. Nutrition is an integral part of this right.

The need to address the impacts of climate change was also recognized in 2014 at the Second International Conference on Nutrition. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition "recognize(s) the need to address the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors on food security and nutrition, in particular on the quantity, quality and diversity of food produced, taking appropriate action to tackle negative effects".⁴ In 2016, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) addressed this theme head-on. In its opening session, CFS emphasized the importance of working together to promote sustainable food systems, improve nutrition and address the challenges of climate change.

While climate change has an impact on nutrition, nutrition can also affect climate change, specifically through consumption and production patterns. Food production and consumption contribute 19–29% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and terrestrial biodiversity loss (60 percent), as well as being a major user of water (70 per cent). Global shifts in lifestyle trends, such as increased consumptions and waste contribute further.

SDG Goal 12.8 reflects these interlinkages as follows "By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature". Given the interlinkages between climate change, food systems, diets, nutrition and health, synergies between climate solutions and healthy and sustainable foods will need to be better understood.

¹ FAO (2015). The State of Food Insecurity in the World. Rome

² <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/en/>

³ FAO (2016). The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate change, agriculture and food security. Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6132e.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

The panel Climate Change and Nutrition will explore the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, particularly through the climate change and healthy diets nexus. The panel will help identify policy options to ensure that measures to mitigate climate change do not undermine the nutrition efforts of countries, nor affect the right to adequate food. On the contrary, policies that promote healthy and sustainable diets would not just reduce the overall carbon footprint of food production, but would also prevent diet related non-communicable diseases and help save lives. The discussions will also inform the work of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, as SDG2 will be reviewed in depth during the upcoming HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2017.

The meeting, organized by the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination in collaboration with the Secretariat of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), will include an opening segment with welcoming remarks by the ECOSOC Vice-President. This will be followed by a panel discussion with the participation of the Chair of the CFS and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food as well as other experts from the civil society and Member States. The findings and conclusions of the study by the UNSCN on climate change, diets, nutrition and health will also be presented during the panel discussion.

The outcome of the meeting will be an informal summary by the ECOSOC Vice-President, highlighting the main conclusions and policy recommendations.

Proposed questions for discussion

- What are the interlinkages between climate change and nutrition and how do they play out in your context/country?
- Which experiences do you have in your country that help promote sustainable and healthy diets while providing climate solutions? Are these different for countries at different levels of development?
- What are the specific challenges faced by people living in countries affected by conflict?
- How can the United Nations system support Member States' efforts to shift dietary patterns towards sustainable and healthy diets?
- Considering that currently only 1% of climate finance is used for health (and no information is available about how much is attributed to nutrition), how can climate finance be used in an innovative way to step up efforts for the promotion of sustainable and healthy diets and nutrition?