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## ADDRESSING GLOBAL FOOD INSECURITY AND FAMINE RISK: REINFORCING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

### Round Table Policy Dialogue

#### CONCEPT NOTE

**When:** Monday, 29 April 2024 | **Time:** 1.15 – 2.30 pm | **Location:** ECOSOC Chamber

**Background:** We are entering an era in which food crises have become increasingly frequent. Despite significant political attention and scaled up funding by the international community, food crises<sup>1</sup> have become more severe and protracted. As per the **Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)**<sup>2</sup>, in 2023, the total population experiencing IPC phase 5 - Catastrophe - was more than eight times higher than in 2016, and the number of countries experiencing the most severe manifestation of acute hunger increased from two in 2016, to five in 2023. Over 705,000 people in five countries / territories were facing Catastrophic conditions of acute food insecurity – the highest number in GRFC reporting and almost double that of 2022.

Food crises are driven by three primary factors: conflict and insecurity, economic shocks, and climate/weather extremes. The co-existence of these drivers is most often the reality, as they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, persistent and intensifying, and rooted in structural causes such as fragile agrifood systems and rural marginalization. Conflict has remained the primary driver of food crises since 2018, affecting on average around half of the total population in acute food insecurity each year. Extreme climate and weather events are also becoming more frequent and prolonged, and their impact is becoming more severe. In 2023, the world experienced its hottest year with widespread episodes of extreme floods, storms, droughts, wildfires, and pest and disease outbreaks. From 2020 onwards, economic shocks became a more prominent driver, including due to the indirect impact of COVID-19 and geopolitical tensions.

**Looking ahead, the convergence of intensifying conflict and insecurity, the devastating impact of extreme weather events driven mainly by El Niño, and inflation casts a shadow over the outlook for 2024, with crises such as the Sudan and Gaza facing the worst deterioration and the highest severity, requiring immediate action to avert the looming threat of famine.**

**Global Food Crisis Initiatives:** In an effort to turn the tide on rising acute food insecurity, the international community has made a range of bold and innovative commitments, while also investing in key partnership initiatives designed to facilitate their realization. These include, to name a few, the G20 Matera Declaration, the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact, the US Road Map for Food Security, the EU

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<sup>1</sup> Food crises occur when rates of acute food insecurity and malnutrition rise sharply at local or national levels, raising the need for emergency food assistance.

<sup>2</sup> The GRFC is developed through a collaborative effort among 16 partners to achieve an independent and consensus-based assessment of acute food insecurity that informs humanitarian and development action. Facilitated by the Food Security Information Network within the Global Network Against Food Crises, the GRFC is a widely recognized reference document on global, regional and country-level acute food insecurity since 2016.

Team Europe Response to the global food crisis, as well as time-bound initiatives such as the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission, the High-level Task Force on Famine, the Food Systems Summit and Coordination Hub, among others.

Recent ambitious initiatives also include the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security and the upcoming Apulia Food Security Initiative, as well as the G20 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, expected to be launched at the G20 Summit in November 2024. The Global Network Against Food Crises sits in support of these initiatives as a key long-term platform promoting sustainable solutions to food crises through its bilateral and multilateral partners.

**Objectives:** Urgent, coherent and effective collaboration is required to effectively address the unacceptable high levels of acute food insecurity and risk of famine and to safeguard the important investments made by the international community into food crisis contexts. Recognizing the opportunity to support coherence and continued collective momentum across food crisis-related initiatives, the G7 Global Alliance on Food Security, the G20 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the Global Network Against Food Crises are bringing together New York-based member state representatives to:

Promote a common understanding of the severity, drivers and trends relating to the state of global food insecurity, based on the latest evidence and analysis of acute food insecurity and malnutrition.

Highlight and promote key multilateral policy solutions required to collectively address and prevent food crises and promote opportunities to leverage these as part of a consistent approach that capitalizes on the respective added value of relevant global initiatives.

Building on existing political commitments to address food crises, promote coherent member state engagement and collective messaging on food crises, as part of New York-based initiatives and processes.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What does the latest Global Report on Food Crises tell us, and what are the implications for consideration in the SDG 2 review, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment and the Summit of the Future?
- What do national governments, who are dealing daily with the effects of these multiple drivers of food crises, need from the rest of the international community? What lessons and success stories do they have for the rest of the community to learn from?
- How can the international community respond to, mitigate and/or prevent the most severe manifestations of acute food insecurity? What policies and approaches have demonstrated success in helping tackle food crises?
- How can we leverage global food security initiatives in high-level intergovernmental processes to better prevent and respond to food crises?
- What are some key multilateral actions recommended at New York level to more effectively address the continuing increase in global acute food insecurity?

**Format:** The in-person event will feature high-level representatives from FAO, WFP and other members of the Global Network Against Food Crises, who will share reflections and discuss solutions based on the findings of the latest Global Report. Member state participation will be in-person at PR level in the ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York. Key reflections and recommendations from the roundtable discussion will be captured in a Chair's summary to be endorsed by the Sponsors of the event.

**24/04/2024**

JOINT EU/FAO/IFAD/UNHCR/UNICEF/WB/WFP NEWS RELEASE

**Rome** - According to the [latest Global Report on Food Crises \(GRFC\)](#), nearly 282 million people in 59 countries and territories experienced high levels of acute hunger in 2023 - a worldwide increase of 24 million from the previous year. This rise was due to the report's increased coverage of food crisis contexts as well as a sharp deterioration in food security, especially in the Gaza Strip and the Sudan.

For four consecutive years, the proportion of people facing acute food insecurity has remained persistently high at almost 22 percent of those assessed, significantly exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels.

Children and women are at the forefront of these hunger crises, with over 36 million children under 5 years of age acutely malnourished across 32 countries, the report shows. Acute malnutrition worsened in 2023, particularly among people displaced because of conflict and disasters.

The Global Network Against Food Crises urgently calls for a transformative approach that integrates peace, prevention and development action alongside at-scale emergency efforts to break the cycle of acute hunger which remains at unacceptably high levels.

"This crisis demands an urgent response. Using the data in this report to transform food systems and address the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition will be vital," said António Guterres, UN Secretary-General.

### **Protracted hunger**

Thirty-six countries have been consistently featured in the GRFC analyses since 2016, reflecting continuing years of acute hunger, and currently representing 80 percent of the world's most hungry.

There has also been an increase of 1 million people facing Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) levels of acute food insecurity across 39 countries and territories, with the biggest increase in the Sudan.

In 2023, more than 705,000 people were at the Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5) level of food insecurity and at risk of starvation – the highest number in the GRFC's reporting history and up fourfold since 2016. The current situation in the Gaza Strip accounts for 80 percent of those facing imminent famine, along with South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali.

According to the GRFC 2024 future outlook, around 1.1 million people in the Gaza Strip and 79 000 people in South Sudan are projected to be in Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5) by July 2024, bringing the total amount of people projected in this phase to almost 1.3 million.

### **Key drivers of food crises**

Intensifying conflict and insecurity, the impacts of economic shocks, and the effects of extreme weather events are continuing to drive acute food insecurity. These interlinked drivers are exacerbating food systems fragility, rural marginalization, poor governance, and inequality, and lead to massive displacement of populations globally. The protection situation of displaced population is additionally impacted by food insecurity.

**Conflict** remained the primary driver affecting 20 countries with nearly 135 million people in acute food insecurity – almost half of the global number. The Sudan faced the largest deterioration due to conflict, with 8.6 million more people facing high levels of acute food insecurity as compared with 2022.

**Extreme weather events** were the primary drivers in 18 countries where over 77 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity, up from 12 countries with 57 million people in 2022. In 2023, the world experienced its hottest year on record and climate related shocks impacted populations, with episodes of severe floods, storms, droughts, wildfires, and pest and disease outbreaks.

**Economic shocks** primarily affected 21 countries where around 75 million people were facing high levels of acute food insecurity, due to their high dependency on imported food and agricultural inputs, persisting macroeconomic challenges, including currency depreciation, high prices and high debt levels.

### **Breaking the cycle of food crises**

Tackling persistent food crises requires urgent long-term national and international investment to transform food systems and boost agricultural and rural development alongside greater crisis preparedness and critical lifesaving assistance at scale, where people need it most. Peace and prevention must also become an integral part of the longer-term food systems transformation. Without this, people will continue to face a lifetime of hunger and the most vulnerable will starve.

Since 2023, needs have outpaced available resources. Humanitarian operations are now desperately overstretched, with many being forced to scale-down and further cut support to the most vulnerable. More equitable and effective global economic governance is imperative and must be matched with government led plans that seek to reduce and end hunger.

To turn the tide on rising acute food insecurity the international community has made a range of bold commitments including through the recent G7 and G20 initiatives. The Global Network Against Food Crises offers to leverage its unparalleled knowledge of hunger in the most fragile countries to strengthen the linkages and build coherence

where possible between these various global initiatives to ensure innovative and concrete impact for those affected by food crises.