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**The Madrid High Level Consultation on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in the Post-2015 Development Framework – 4 April 2013**

***An Issue of Justice: The Right to Food in a Climate Constrained World***

**Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation –Climate Justice**

**Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today and to participate in this important event. I am pleased that this inclusive and consultative process on *Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition* is resulting in powerful messages for the post 2015 development agenda.**

**It is encouraging that the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment has been reinforced as a core strategy for ending food and nutrition insecurity, and that there is an emphasis on the right to food and the need to embrace a human-rights framework. Likewise the call for a comprehensive approach, which acknowledges linkages and requires an interdisciplinary dimension to addressing the underlying causes of these linked problems is a core message.**

**But, I would like to use this opportunity to go beyond these words, the terminology we are all comfortable with, to see what this means**

**on the ground, and to explore how we put these well-meaning statements into practice. We need to be honest with ourselves. We have said most of these things before.... yet we still haven't made the progress required. The shocking statistics on hunger and under nutrition highlighted by previous speakers, and in the background documents for this meeting, are an affront to us all. It makes no sense, morally, economically or developmentally, that children are undernourished and unable to reach their full potential. But it is also an injustice, passed from one generation to the next, as we fail to address the root causes and fail to solve the problem.**

**So let's make the vision presented to this meeting a reality '*We can end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition within a generation*'. But this will mean acknowledging that we need to do things differently. It will mean doing what we say. And it will mean a serious ratcheting up of leadership and commitment. This is where you all have a role to play.**

**Let me share with you an excerpt from the speech Nelson Mandela made when he launched The Elders on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007. Referring to the group, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, he said:**

*“I know that this group will not become arbitrary and arrogant, and that it will seek advice from expert organisations and work cooperatively with them. What’s more, they will not take the easy, short term route, but support long-term, sustainable approaches that address the root causes of the problems they tackle.*

*They are, I know, committed to working with local and indigenous knowledge; to listening and bringing together antagonists and protagonists; to working with anyone who is motivated to resolve a problem. They can help foster and introduce innovative ideas and little known solutions to connect those who have real practical needs with those who have something to give.”*

**I am not sure that we Elders do fully live up to this description, but it is a perfect outline of the leadership needed to truly tackle hunger and nutrition in our world today.**

**As we aren’t succeeding, despite decades of trying, we need to understand why. So we should start with a genuine exercise in listening to those we seek to help, before we design a new version of the solution to their problems as we see it. The consultations the UN is leading for the post 2015 development of agenda are part of this – but each one of us also has a personal obligation to listen.**

**Listening sounds easy, but few are genuinely expert at it! And it takes a great humility to say that we may have missed something obvious over the years that would have helped us to have better results. But, better to find that out now and start on a new path.**

**For these reasons, my Foundation is working with the Government of Ireland to organise a listening conference on Hunger - Nutrition - Climate Justice in Dublin later this month. We have worked hard to make sure this conference gives voice to grassroots practitioners, and that policy makers and leaders participate by listening and learning, and as a result, leading. This conference will, I hope, be the start of a genuine dialogue, which these consultations also contribute to, between grassroots practitioners and policy makers. We have some time between now and 2015 to ask questions, to listen intently, and to learn from real world experiences. This all sounds very obvious I know, but we simply don't do enough of it.**

**We will also explore, through the Dublin conference, what it means to put some of our words and phrases into action – including human rights, empowerment and joined up approaches. These have to be more than words in strategies and policy papers. They have to be at the core of what we do.**

**I would like to share Jannet Avako's story with you. Jannet is a widow with 5 children who lives in Aliamu village in Uganda. She has always been poor, but when her husband died she was left with nothing. She was chased off her husband's land and had no way to earn a living. She was destitute, her children had no bedding, she had no latrine and no bathing shed. Her family were surviving on one meal a day and she couldn't afford to send her children to school. She lost all respect and considered suicide.**

**The turning point for her was when she heard a local development organisation, AFARD, say that all people, both men and women, widowed or not, have rights to the basics in life; food, water, housing. Up until this point she had no idea that she, a widowed woman, had the same rights as a married woman, or even a man. An understanding of her rights – and the support she received from a rights based organisation – helped her to grow in confidence, and to access the support she needed to become a successful farmer and to send all of her children to school.**

**Jannet keeps goats and sells them to buy the things she needs like materials to build her house or a mattress to sleep on. Her first child will soon go to secondary school as a boarder and her youngest child is attending nursery school. By diversifying her crops and intercropping maize and soya bean, Jannet is managing the risks**

**associated with climate change: unpredictable seasons, and more frequent droughts and flash floods. With the income earned from selling the soya beans, she has been able to rent additional land and hires extra labour to help her.**

**Jannet is proud again. She can provide for her family, she is a respected member of her community and she is attending adult literacy classes. At the end of the conversation, Jannet wanted to have her photograph taken, dressed in the uniform that signals that she is attending adult education classes and holding a shovel and axe, men's tools that signal her ability to farm her land, build her own latrine and care for her family.**

**Rights matter. The Right to Food is not an abstract commitment. It is fact of life and something we are committed to providing for every man, woman and child on the planet. We can no longer treat it as an aspiration.**

**People are hungry for many reasons, including lack of access to resources, the absence of rights, conflict, natural disasters and climate change. It is clear to me, when I visit families and communities living with the daily reality of poverty, that they see no divisions between the environment (access to water and soil to grow**

**food), economics (ability to earn a living and access to credit) and social development (access to education, healthcare, information and decision making): all of these issues are linked, closely-related, part of the reason why they are poor, powerless, in ill-health or hungry.**

**Our challenge is to understand these linkages in the same way that those experiencing them do, and to design responses that solve the closely related problems. So although the post 2015 consultation process has 11 themes, and structuring the consultation in such a way is practical, we must avoid the temptation to look at the issues in isolation. To be effective the post 2015 development agenda will have to make the links between hunger, under nutrition and climate change, as well as the links to water, health and equity.**

**This is something my colleagues and I strive for through climate justice; an approach which links human rights, climate change and development to achieve a people-centred response. Climate justice requires a multidisciplinary approach – thereby enabling linkages and avoiding siloes - and mirrors the three dimensions of sustainable development.**

**As you know, the impacts of climate change are contributing to the injustices vulnerable people and communities experience, urgency and equity, as a precondition for sustainable development.**

**We are here today to give our political commitment to support, raise awareness, and give leadership on hunger, food security and nutrition within the post-2015 agenda negotiations. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is today launching the 1,000 days of action for the Millennium Development Goals here in Madrid. This will ensure that robust efforts are made right up to the deadline in 2015, particularly in more vulnerable countries. Let each of us give our personal commitment that things will not continue as they have been up to now, both in a renewed commitment to complete the MDGs as actively and robustly as possible, and in preparing the Post-2015 Agenda.**

**Hunger is not about statistics. It is about people, families, mothers, and fathers and their children. This we can all relate to. It always strikes me that we all want the same for our children regardless of where we live, under a tarpaulin or in a 4 bedroom house. We want our children to have enough to eat, and we want them to go to school and do well in life so that they can go on to provide for their own families. The inability to do this strips people of their pride, their dignity and their resolve; their ability to do so empowers, motivates and energises. Jannet's story is evidence of this.**



**We speak a lot in the worlds of human rights and development of helping people to help themselves. Every person wants to care for their own family – it is part of our nature – we have to respect this and create the conditions whereby everyone is afforded the opportunity to do so.**

**At this stage in my career I no longer look at hunger, under nutrition or the impacts of climate change as a political leader or a UN representative. I look at these ‘people-problems’ as a mother and more particularly, as a grandmother. The truth is that we are talking about how to have a viable world in 2050. My four grandchildren will be in their forties in 2050, and will share the world with nine billion others. How will they look back on this vital period, when it will be clear to them that we had the opportunity to take the right course by the end of 2015? How will we be judged- not in the long term-but in only 37 years? Will we stand accused of shirking responsibility or will we grasp the opportunity to set a new and viable course for humanity? One way or another, it will happen on our watch.**

**So I ask you in your role as ministers and leaders, to approach these issues as a person, as a parent and a member of a family. Let us**

**bring to the post 2015 discussions a sense of empathy, a commitment to do things differently and a pledge that we will make our grandchildren proud of the leadership we gave at a moment of real opportunity.**