

NGO/CSO Open Letter to UN Member States on the global hunger crisis

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Dear UN Member States,

"No water, no food, a hopeless life. Above all, my children are starving. They are on the verge of death. Unless they get some food, I'm afraid they will die."

Sumaya, 32, mother of four, IDP camp in the Somali Region, Ethiopia

We, the undersigned [insert number] non-governmental organizations working with the most vulnerable communities and witnessing the catastrophic effects of the unprecedented global food crisis unfolding, urgently request that you act immediately to prevent more unnecessary suffering.

From Somalia to Haiti, South Sudan to Yemen, Afghanistan to Nigeria, people's lives in the most fragile contexts are being devastated by a global food crisis, fueled by a deadly mix of conflict, climate change, rising costs and economic crises, exacerbated by COVID-19 and the Ukraine conflict.

Fifty million people are now just one step away from starvation. Over 345 million more are bowing under the crushing weight of hunger, struggling to feed their families and at risk of death.

Behind these statistics are real people and lack of action has horrific, real life and death consequences. For the woman who fled her country to escape the violence of war and now has her food ration halved or suspended completely. For the hungry child forced to drop out of school to work so their family can eat. For the young girl forced into marriage, where she faces sexual exploitation and abuse. And for the caregiver who makes the long journey to seek treatment for a severely malnourished toddler only to find the health clinic is closed due to funding shortages.

We call on UN Member States to show political leadership on the global food crisis by translating promises into immediate action. Famine prevention and mitigation, now and in the future, must be a top priority at this year's UN General Assembly. This means providing enough, fast, flexible, multi-year funding to save lives now and a promise to work collectively to deliver on commitments to reach Zero Hunger and end hunger crises once and for all.

Save Lives Now

- Immediately deliver the funding needed to save the lives of the 882,000 people experiencing catastrophic hunger now and to prevent 50 million more people slipping into catastrophic levels of hunger. Funding must be multi-year, flexible, and unearmarked, and additional so as to not divert funding from other urgent humanitarian responses.
- Prioritise support to local actors, including crisis-affected people-led organisations, who are often best placed to quickly anticipate and respond to emergencies.
- Ensure humanitarian access through increased humanitarian diplomacy and prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war
- Ensure support for gender- and age- sensitive multi-sector programming that addresses the compounding impacts of hunger on vulnerable people, such as increased protection, health, and sexual and gender-based violence risks.
- Prioritise efforts to prevent and treat wasting in children, with a focus on the first 1,000 days.

Build Resilience

- Double down on efforts to strengthen food systems that deliver affordable, healthy nutritious food for everyone and improve the natural environment, including in the most fragile and conflict-affected places. This requires:

Supporting female and male smallholder farmers to increase local production of culturally appropriate, safe, nutritious food sustainably.

Strengthening the functioning of local, national, and regional agricultural market and trade systems to improve food security, smallholder livelihoods, and small and medium enterprises.

Ensuring policy responses to the global food crisis contribute to stabilising key food and commodity markets, and minimize negative impacts on global, regional, and national agriculture trade, food security, and commodity prices for the most vulnerable.

Adhering to international guidelines and principles developed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and other international commitments.

- Step up political efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, including support to locally led initiatives on peacebuilding and climate action.
- Strengthen early warning systems, ensuring they include the most marginalized communities. Early warning systems must consistently trigger anticipatory action

and early action, supported by ensuring dedicated pre-financing is available to these triggers.

- Support efforts to work across the nexus by ensuring development actions increase investments in addressing root causes and underlying drivers of hunger crises, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Secure the Future

- Double climate adaptation finance delivered in the form of grants, including support for smallholders, and meet the commitment of providing \$600 billion in climate finance 2020-2025, and support the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility.
- Reallocate at least \$100 billion in Special Drawing Rights to the International Monetary Fund and through Multilateral Development Banks, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Direct the World Bank to go beyond the additional commitment of \$12 billion over 15 months to respond to the global hunger crisis; and lead on debt relief.
- Fully fund evidence-based nutrition interventions, aligned to the Nutrition Investment Framework.

The international community and national governments are failing to meet their duty and have prioritised political and economic interests over the wellbeing of the world's most vulnerable children, families and communities. While political leaders have made many promises, in the cities, towns, villages, and refugee and internal displacement camps where millions of lives hang in the balance, far too little has changed.

In a world of plenty, leaving people to starve is a policy choice. We call on you as world leaders to take urgent action to stem this crisis and prevent future ones. You must immediately deliver the funding needed to reach 50 million people on the edge of starvation to save lives NOW. You must also support vulnerable countries and communities to build resilience NOW. And you must take action to anticipate, prevent and prepare for subsequent crises to secure the future, including by delivering much needed climate finance, reallocated Special Drawing Rights, and meaningful debt relief.

We repeatedly miss the opportunity to prevent hunger and hardship from happening in the first place by not responding quickly enough to early warnings to save lives, build resilience, and make the smart investments needed to sustainably address hunger crises in the long term. If the pandemic taught us anything it is that prevention is more humane and much less expensive than waiting to respond. The lack of political will and institutional failure to act quickly before the worst-case hits means people are being left to lurch from crisis to crisis. People are not starving; they are being starved.

Accompanying this letter, we outline a set of specific recommendations to help address the current hunger crisis and prevent future crises, endorsed by NGOs across the world.

We have already lost far too much time – the families we work with every day need action NOW. The lives of millions of girls, boys, women, and men depend on the bold and courageous actions you, the United Nations Member States, take - or fail to take – when you gather at the UN General Assembly in the coming weeks. We must not let people starve to death on our watch. There is no place for famine in the 21st century.