



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY A SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE DEBATE ON AGENDA ITEM 26: AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION, AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 2 November 2015)**

Mr Chairman,

I am honoured to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Before we delve into the agenda item of today, I would like to express on behalf of the members of the Group of 77 and China a message of condolences to the families, relatives and friends of all the victims of the Russian Airbus A321 that crashed over the Sinai Peninsula in the Arab Republic of Egypt on Saturday, 31 October 2015, killing 224 people on board, most of whom were Russian citizens.

Mr Chairman,

More than any item on the agenda of this Committee, the issue of "agriculture development, food security and nutrition" is central to the eradication of poverty which the international community correctly termed the "greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development".

In this regard, the report of the Secretary-General on agriculture development, food security and nutrition (A/70/333) and the note on the main decisions and policy recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security (A/70/92-E/2015/82) are instructive not only with regards to progress made towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal target of halving poverty by 2015, but also in shining a light on the challenges ahead if the sustainable development goal of ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture by 2030 is to be accomplished.

Mr Chairman,

We are heartened by the positive elements from the Secretary-General's report which show that 216 million people have since 1990 to 1992 been lifted out of hunger and that undernourishment in the developing world has fallen from 23.3 to 12.9 per cent within that same period. Another encouraging aspect is that seventy-two out of the 129 developing countries monitored by the Food and Agriculture Organisation have reached the MDG hunger target of halving the prevalence of undernourishment between 1990 and 2015, and furthermore that several more countries are likely to do so by the end of 2015. It is also a welcome observation that extreme poverty -which consists in living on less than US\$ 1.25 per day -in low- and middle-income countries also fell globally between 1981 and 2011.

These observations are important because they demonstrate that sustaining rapid progress in reducing hunger is achievable.

There are observations in the Secretary-General's report which, however, point to the challenges ahead if the sustainable development goal of eradicating poverty in the next 15 years is to be achieved.

It is worrying that while it is possible to sustainably increase production to feed everyone in the world, hundreds of millions of people still do not have the means to access enough food to meet their individual dietary needs.

It is also distressing that the overall progress in reducing hunger has unfortunately been highly uneven. The Secretary-General's report notes that almost 795 million people remain chronically hungry, lacking sufficient food for conducting an active and healthy life; and that over 1 billion people are extremely poor and live on less than US\$ 1.25 per day. What is furthermore disconcerting is that there has been a reduction in the speed with which undernourishment rates have been falling since 2010-2012, owing to the global economic and financial crisis and violent conflict within some countries.

As developing countries, we would agree with the assertion that regardless of whether the failure to achieve international hunger targets is natural or human-induced, what is undeniable is that this results in protracted crises, with increased vulnerability and food insecurity subsisting among large segments of the world's population.

Mr Chairman,

Lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals efforts show that, while economic growth is an important factor for success in the fight against hunger, it is often insufficient by itself to guarantee access to food. Growth needs to be accompanied by strong political will to end hunger and special interventions to ensure that growth benefits the poor.

Hunger and undernourishment can place a high burden on health systems and other social services, and have a negative impact on educational achievement levels. Given the universal and integrated nature of the sustainable development goals, investing in sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition can have a positive spin-off on the attainment of the other goals.

Towards this end, there is a need to continually strengthen and revitalise the agriculture sector in developing countries, including through the empowerment of indigenous peoples, rural communities, small scale farmers and fishermen, and providing technical and financial assistance, access to and transfer of technology.

Thank you.