

Thursday, June 19, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Re: Urgent NGO recommendations on the 2008 G8 Summit

Dear Mr. Harper,

The addition of the global food crisis to the agenda of the G8 meeting has created a significant opportunity for Canada to show global leadership in the mitigation of this crisis. Through both its political leadership and G8 public service delegation, Canada must make commitments that will change causal factors, support solutions, and urge other G8 members to follow its lead.

The food crisis will have greatest impacts on the 850 million people who are already chronically hungry and spending 50-80% of their income on food. It is a major humanitarian disaster that could push a further 100 million people into absolute poverty with ripples that would threaten all of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Number One – halving global hunger. This crisis reflects the world's failure to ensure an enabling environment for states to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to adequate food for their citizens.

As Canadian NGOs, many of whom have partners in countries most affected by the rising food costs, we applaud the Canadian Government's immediate response to the crisis of an additional \$50 million in food aid as well as the untying of all Canadian food aid. This important short term response needs to be followed by medium and long term commitments to effectively deal with both the crisis as well as its underlying causes. These causal factors are wide ranging and extend to aid policy, agricultural development, international trade and monetary policies, biofuels production, market volatility and climate change. We urge Canada to do its utmost to be part of the solution to this crisis as well as influence other G8 nations to make similar commitments.

It is essential that the crisis be addressed at every opportunity in international fora, given the gravity of the situation. Canada must acknowledge the importance of the global food crisis on the G-8 Summit agenda, and should use this gathering and subsequent international meetings to announce commitments in the following areas:

- 1) **Make agriculture a sector priority in Canadian aid** – CIDA needs to give well-funded and focused support to smallholder farmers to strengthen their livelihoods while sustainably increasing their food production for household consumption and local markets. The level of funding must be significant – building to at least \$500 million yearly, or 10% of CIDA's budget within two

years. An additional \$300 million/yr of new funding must be provided to avoid cutting funds from other important work.

- 2) **Play a leadership role in the reform of the multilateral food/agriculture institutions** – there are serious weaknesses in some of the current institutions, particularly in their ability to serve small-holder farmers. Carefully integrated efforts by these institutions will be vital to solving a global food crisis that is likely to persist. The reform of any one institution should be integrated with other reforms. Canada should call for a review of their interlocking mandates as a follow-up to the release of the UN High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis's Comprehensive Framework for Action.
- 3) **Contribute to a supportive and non-threatening international trade environment** – trade rules must allow southern governments to support sustainable local food production, protect smallholder farmers from dumping and boost their power in increasingly concentrated markets. These are all key elements for implementing the human right to adequate food in these countries. Canadian trade negotiators should cease their efforts to further reduce protections for the developing world's poor farmers.
- 4) **Support the use of commodity agreements and food stocks to reduce price volatility** – Given the likelihood of continuing tight global food supplies, steps must be taken to reduce the volatility of commodity prices that aggravate the effect of food prices for consumers and discourage sustainable production increases by smallholder farmers.
- 5) **Avoid threats to food security posed by biofuel development** - Canadian aid should not be used to promote or expand large-scale biofuel production and the Canadian government should undertake more in-depth study before embarking on national biofuel development incentives such as setting targets for biofuel content in gasoline.

The 2008 G8 Summit is an important opportunity for the world's economic leaders to abate the global food crisis and support hundreds of millions of affected people.

We, the undersigned, strongly urge the Canadian Government and G8 delegation to provide leadership on the issue of the Global Food Crisis by committing to a sustainable and long term response at the upcoming G8 Summit.