

Food and Health: A Life-Saving Combination for Adults and Children Living with HIV

Oral Statement under Item 3 – Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Right to Food, submitted for the 19th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Association Points-Coeur, Church World Service, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), Dominican Leadership Conference, Fédération Internationale d'Associations de Médecins Catholiques, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Catholic Rural Association, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice, New Humanity, Pax Christi International, World Alliance of YMCAS, VIDES Internazionale, and World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations.

Caritas Internationalis joins with other 14 NGOs to thank Mr. de Schutter for his efforts to promote and monitor respect for, as well as protection and fulfilment of, the Right to Food.

As specified by Mr. de Schutter, the Right to Food cannot be reduced to a right not to starve: since nutrition is linked intrinsically to health and to life, the Right to Food must guarantee the right to feed oneself.

In this regard, the co-signatories feel obliged to call particular attention to the special dietary needs of adults and children with severe illnesses, notably HIV and AIDS, since such needs have not been addressed sufficiently in the Report submitted by Mr. de Schutter.

Evidence has demonstrated links between adequate nutrition and improved outcomes for HIV treatment. Adequate nutrition is necessary to maintain the immune system, manage opportunistic infections, optimize response to medical treatment, sustain healthy levels of physical activity, and support optimal quality of life for a person living with HIV. Moreover, good nutrition may contribute to slowing the progression of the disease, can help to optimize the benefits of antiretroviral drugs, and may increase compliance with treatment regimens, both of which are essential to prolonging the lives of HIV-positive people and to preventing the transmission of HIV from mother to child. Nutrition interventions also are urgently required for patients affected by tuberculosis, and HIV/TB co-infection.

In view of the above-cited situation, and considering the lack of attention paid to

those persons with special dietary needs due to the impact of life-threatening health challenges, the co-signatories invite the Special Rapporteur to urgently convene, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, a joint public consultation, followed by a joint Report, focused on the fundamental link between food security and health, with particular attention to, *inter alia*, HIV-positive adults and children, especially those being maintained on antiretroviral treatment.