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# **The 2<sup>nd</sup> National conference on the human right to adequate food in Uganda: *Twenty years later***

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## ***MEDIA BRIEFING AT THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE, KAMPALA***

**13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023**

### **0.1 Background**

As the most critical resource for the survival of the planet's ecosystems and humanity, food has been at the centre of development, the world over. When food is not adequately available, the resultant hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition portray a dysfunctional food system and imply a violation of human rights, especially the right to adequate food and other dependent rights like the right to health and life. The human right



to adequate food is one of the most fundamental human rights that are firmly established in international human rights declarations and treaties as well as national legal frameworks.

In January 2003, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture (MAAIF), Makerere University and the International Project on the Right to Food in Development (IPRFD) of the University of Oslo, Norway, organized the 1<sup>st</sup> ever National Conference on Implementation of the Rights to Adequate Food in Uganda at Jinja Nile Resort Hotel - Uganda. This conference influenced and catalyzed several decisions around the right to adequate food including the inclusion of this in the 2002-2003 UHRC Annual Report, the approach adopted in the Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy (UFNP) of 2003 and stimulated debate at that time about how to use a human rights approach to solving the problem of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition.

## **0.2 The SECOND Conference**

As Uganda positions itself as a front-runner in food systems transformation across Africa, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Makerere University, the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization, and other partners are organizing a second national cross-disciplinary conference on the right to adequate food in Uganda, 20 years later. This two-day conference slated to convene at Makerere University, Yusufu Lule Central Teaching Facility (CTF) Auditorium, from 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023, will attract International, regional and national experts on the right to adequate food as well as the local populace



from districts/regions that are most vulnerable to the derogation of this right.

At the time of the first conference, the focus was on influencing the draft food and nutrition policy that was in the final stages of development in 2003 and it was subsequently adopted in the same year. This second conference will therefore shift the focus to positioning the human right to adequate food as a lever for harnessing inclusivity in the food systems transformation agenda of Uganda so that no one is left behind in the process. It is also timely as the global and national food outlook is one of demand and supply uncertainties characterised by fast-expanding food markets and a surge in the food import bills across continents.

A recent joint report by UN Agencies; FAO, WFP, UNICEF, WHO and IFAD in 2022, indicated that (1) one out of 10 people is suffering from hunger while up to three (3) billion people could not afford healthy diets. Malnutrition in form of stunting in children under five years of age affects about a quarter of all children (149.2 million), while 677.8 million adults are obese; 1.13 billion have raised blood pressure and 422.1 million suffer from diet-related type 2 diabetes mellitus.

The reports also note; unhealthy food environments, inadequate consumer protection and poor consumer behaviour and choices among others, as responsible for the rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) especially the four of the world's top 10 leading risk factors causing death; that is, high blood pressure, high blood



glucose, cancer, overweight and obesity. Moreover, about 8 million deaths annually are attributable to unhealthy diets that expose them to excess consumption of food high in sodium and other salts, sugars and fats, particularly saturated and trans fats, and inadequate consumption of whole grains, pulses, vegetables and fruits.

The COVID-19 situation also complicated the situation as unhealthy diets were associated with increased mortality, with the situation more precarious in patients with overweight, obesity and diet-related NCDs.

Despite Uganda's commitment to transform its food system and realize the right to adequate food, the following still pose a challenge to the realization of the right to adequate food:-

- i. Poverty which affects 20.3% of the population, the subsistence economy standing at 39% of households and the persistent hunger and starvation in the Karamoja sub-region on an annual cyclic basis.
- ii. In terms of malnutrition, the most recent 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Surveys (UDHS) showed that stunting levels, an indication of chronic under-nutrition in children 6-59 months old, affect 29% of this vulnerable population equivalent to nearly two million children. Although stunting among children is decreasing in Uganda, the reduction is slow and the country might not meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 targets on stunting,



anaemia and breastfeeding, unless there is accelerated progress. This comes with consequences on health, education and development.

- iii. The Government of Uganda has over the years adopted supportive policies, laws, programmes and plans that are relevant to food systems and the right to adequate food. However, a draft Food and Nutrition Bill of 2009 has not yet been approved to proceed to Parliament for adoption into law. Given that the draft Bill had strongly focused on the right to adequate food and considering that the food system approach goes beyond outcomes of food security and nutrition.

### **0.3 Intended outcome**

We note that these challenges of malnutrition remain apparent partly because the implementation of the human right to adequate food has fallen short of expectation and faces perpetual threats, especially in vulnerable communities affected by shocks and disasters.

This Second Conference, therefore is intended to; provide an opportunity to elaborate on the extent to which the existing Constitutional provisions have been implemented to accelerate the progressive realization of the right to adequate food and the sustainable transformation of the food system in the country;

Take stock of the progress made towards the implementation of the right to adequate food in Uganda with a particular focus on the



development and implementation of relevant policy and legal frameworks; institutional mechanisms and programmes that support the realization of this right.

The conference will also generate a forward-looking consensus on synergistic actions for the rights-based inclusive transformation of food systems and prescribe relevant interventions needed to accelerate the progressive realization of the right to adequate food within the realm of sustainable food systems transformation, amplify the human rights dimensions affecting food systems transformation in Uganda as well as sharing available lessons and evidence on the right to adequate food in Ugandan communities affected by disaster and other forms of deprivation.

Among the key guest and discussants invited for this second conference is; Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, the Chairperson Uganda Human Rights Commission Hon. Mariam Wangadya, Makerere University Vice Chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Food H.E Michael Fakhri, Deputy Ambassador of Norway H.E Elin Østebø Johansen, FAO Representative to Uganda H.E Dr. Antonio Querido and the Chairperson, Committee on World Food Security/Spain Ambassador At Large for Global Food Security H.E Gabriel Ferrero de Loma Osorio among others.





## Conclusion

We would like, in a special way, to thank the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Makerere and Kyambogo Universities in Uganda, the University of Oslo, Norway, WFP, FAO, Food Rights Alliance and the Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT) for the financial and technical support invested into this conference. We would also like to thank the government of Uganda for creating an enabling environment for the realization of human rights as a whole.

## For God and My Country