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## World Hunger Day 2024: Uphold people's food sovereignty!

As we join the global community in commemorating World Hunger Day 2024, we are reminded that hunger remains one of the most pressing challenges of our time, especially across Africa. We must confront the stark reality that millions face food insecurity and malnutrition. This day is an occasion to echo the urgent need to shift the global food system in favour of those who produce our food — peasants, smallholder farmers, and Indigenous communities and to protect their rights, dignity, and livelihoods.

Food is not a commodity to be traded at the whims of the market; it is a fundamental human right. This right still needs to be fulfilled in many African nations as food systems become more industrialized and corporate-driven, eroding traditional agricultural practices and undermining smallholder farmers.

Despite being home to some of the most fertile lands on earth, Africa has been caught in a web of food insecurity for decades. Africa's food systems are at a crossroads. Several challenges and exogenous shocks—including recurrent outbreaks of pests and diseases, limited availability, and adoption of yield-increasing technologies—have exposed the fragilities of Africa's food systems, undermining the ability to meet the food demand of a burgeoning population.

Africa's smallholder farmers, who account for nearly 80% of agricultural production on the continent, remain marginalized. They face systemic challenges, from lack of access to land and capital to poor infrastructure and markets. Yet, these farmers are the true custodians of food sovereignty. They grow diverse crops, use Indigenous knowledge to manage land and prioritize local food security over export-driven models.

However, with secure land tenure and access to seeds and water, their ability to produce food and sustain their families is maintained. Large-scale land grabs, often backed by powerful agribusinesses, have led to the displacement of many African farmers, threatening their livelihoods and the continent's food sovereignty.

Furthermore, the climate crisis exacerbates the challenges faced by Africa's food producers. Changing rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, and soil degradation hit small-scale farmers hardest. As droughts ravage the Sahel, floods destroy farms in Eastern and Southern Africa, and rising temperatures shrink harvests across the continent.

We call on our governments to invest in sustainable farming techniques rooted in African ecosystems and ensure that those who nurture the land have the tools and resources they need to thrive in a changing climate. Our governments must prioritize policies that favour small-scale producers, ensure fair access to land and seeds, promote sustainable farming methods, and protect rural communities from exploitation. Sustainable subsidy provisions for farmers should be considered to support the continent's food security efforts. We reject the call and

push for the dominance of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Africa's food supply system.

We need investment in local food systems that support community markets, strengthen food processing and storage infrastructure, and connect African producers directly to African consumers.

Amidst the growing challenges of food insecurity in Africa, school nutrition programs are critical interventions to safeguard the health and future of the continent's children. These programs, implemented in countries like Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, provide essential meals to millions of students, helping to combat malnutrition, improve educational outcomes, and promote school attendance, particularly in low-income and rural areas. As we call for food sovereignty and the protection of peasants' rights, we demand better investment in these programs, ensuring that they become sustainable, resilient, and capable of reaching every needy child.

On this World Hunger Day, we reiterate our call to African governments to:

- Design and implement policies that respond to emerging agricultural and food systems challenges.
- Accelerate adoption and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to prevent food supply disruptions.
- Provide an enabling policy environment for the financial sector to offer Agri-SMEs more business and financial tools.
- Extend social protection programs to farmers, particularly those in rural areas.
- Increase investments in market infrastructure and other incentive mechanisms that support African farmers in adopting climate-resilient practices, including afforestation and land rehabilitation.



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