

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food

25 January 2019

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds you well in the new year. I am pleased to share with you highlights from the past few months and to preview some upcoming events in 2019.

For those who have newly subscribed to the mailing list,ⁱ these newsletters are part of a greater initiative to improve the visibility of the work carried out under the right to food mandate and to ensure that it is inclusive and accessible to all partners. In furtherance of this effort, I welcome any feedback, suggestions for relevant reports, or op-eds, etc., via email at srfood@ohchr.org and invite you to follow me on Twitter [@HilalElver](https://twitter.com/HilalElver). I also encourage you to explore my new blog, <https://hilalelver.org>, which not only serves as an information hub on the right to food, but is also regularly updated to feature breaking news and activities relevant to the mandate. Here are some of the major activities of the mandate from the past few months:

Committee on World Food Security, 45th Session. From 15 to 19 October 2018, the 45th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS45) convened at FAO headquarters in Rome. Over the course of a busy week, I had the unique opportunity to participate in the CFS Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) Forum, offer remarks at several side events, and deliver the Global Thematic Event Keynote Address, available for viewing [here](#). A full recap of CFS45 activities, including a daily summary of events, is accessible on my [blog](#). Apart from the public events, I attended several bilateral meetings with NGOs, member countries of Friends of the Right to Food, as well as the Chair of the CFS and Secretariat to exchange views and discuss future collaboration through meetings and joint initiatives over the next few months.

Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. On 25 October 2018, I presented my thematic report on [agricultural workers and the right to food](#) (A/73/164) to the UN General Assembly 3rd Committee in New York. The report addresses the barriers that agricultural workers face in realizing the right to food, and the role of the State, private sector, and consumers in preventing and mitigating violations of human and labour rights that agricultural and food workers experience in a globalized food system. While in New York, I presented the findings of my report at an event co-hosted by Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute and the Columbia Center on Sustainable Development. I continued to explore the themes of my report during a panel discussion with members of the Food Chain Workers Alliance, WhyHunger, and the Rural & Migrant Ministry hosted by the Church Center of the United Nations. I also took part in a panel organized by the Sweden Mission at UN

Headquarters in New York on 22 October 2018 with the Special Rapporteur on Toxics, “Exploitation by Exposure: Human rights and toxic exposures.”

Adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants. After nearly two decades of consultations and negotiations among stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and States. States of the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of the adoption the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas ([Resolution A/C.3/73/L.30](#)) in November 2018. I was humbled to support the efforts of FIAN, La Via Campesina and other partners in accomplishing this historic endeavor and I look forward to the next stage of implementation. To [learn more](#) about the Declaration and to better understand its importance in the context of the right to food, and human rights read my joint [commentary](#) published in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, co-authored with Marc Edelman and Smita Narula.

Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition. From 29 to 30 October 2018, I attended the [Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition](#) in Madrid. The Summit was a joint initiative of the Spanish Parliament, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the FAO, and the Latin America and the Caribbean Parliamentary Front against Hunger, and intended to promote the active and effective participation of parliamentarians in efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger). My presentation on “Ending hunger and its causes” inspired a rich dialogue among attendees regarding best practices for realizing the right to food at the national and international levels. While in Spain, I gave public talks, radio and TV interviews, and met with civil society organizations and representatives from national and local governments. In Madrid and Lanzarote, one of the Canary Islands, I presented at conferences organized by Vida Sana Association and Bio Culture on “Agroecology and the future of food” and pesticide use.

Other events and publications. The last quarter of 2018 was quite busy with [conferences and meetings](#) relevant to the right to food mandate, including public talks in Lund, Sweden and Istanbul, Turkey, organized by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute. On the occasion of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, I gave the opening lecture on “History of the right food” at the Maltepe University in Istanbul.

Recent activities have also been documented in various [publications](#), including a co-signed letter calling for the protection of food systems from genetic extinction technology, “[The Global Food and Agriculture Movement Says ‘No’ to Release of Gene Drives](#),” co-authored opinion pieces, “[When agricultural workers go hungry](#),” and “[We cannot end hunger by 2030 without human rights](#),” and an interview on “[Why Food Security is a Global Farmworker Issue](#).”

Looking ahead: Human Rights Council and more. In early February, I will participate in the 2nd Global Conference of the Sustainable Food Systems Programme, a multi-stakeholder partnership focused on catalyzing sustainable food consumption and production. Following the conference, I will attend the 40th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva to present my most recent thematic report on fishery workers and the right to food (A/HRC/40/56) and reports on my latest country visits to Argentina (2018), Indonesia (2018), and Vietnam (2017). Full-text versions of these reports are available in all official languages on the OHCHR [website](#). Future meetings and events, including official country visits, will be added to my [calendar](#) as they are scheduled.


Call for Expressions of Interest: Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 “Zero Hunger.” Over the next few months, I will be writing a thematic report on the SDGs and the right to food to be presented at the UN General Assembly in October 2019. The report will afford particular attention to SDG 2, which aims to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.”

Final Thoughts. The year 2018 offered important opportunities to reflect upon the efforts to progressively realize the right to food. The celebration of the 70th anniversary of the UDHR, for example, and the selection of the right to food as the Global Thematic Event for CFS45, encouraged us to consider the state of world hunger, evaluate the impact of the Voluntary Guidelines on Right to Food, and the implementation of human rights instruments, generally. Unfortunately, despite well-meaning policies, laws and regulations, recent [FAO reports](#) were unusually pessimistic, as the figures of the undernourishment increased, especially in conflict and natural disaster zones.

It seems that, in 2019, the right to food community will continue to address severe food crises, such as famine, while also dealing with the root causes of hunger and malnutrition. I am hoping that the senseless war in Yemen, and conflicts in other places where protracted crises continue to hurt people will end soon, and that future generations will see better days.

As always, thank you for your work in promoting the universal right to food and for defending those for whom it is not yet fully realized.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hilal Elver', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hilal Elver
UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food

ⁱ If you have received this newsletter by mistake and would like to unsubscribe, please email srfood@ohchr.org with the subject “Unsubscribe.”