

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (13th session)

Statement by Norway

5 March 2010

**Interactive dialogue with the
Special Rapporteur on the Right to food, Olivier De Schutter**

President,

My comments pertain to the right to food.

Let me thank the Special Rapporteur for a comprehensive and politically challenging report on the right to food. Access to food for all is fundamental, not only to eradicating poverty and hunger, but also to meet other MDGs.

The responsibility for realising the right to food rests with the state: Key measures would be, inter alia, to ratify and implement ILO conventions and implement the FAO voluntary guidelines. We do, however, agree with the Special Rapporteur that the conduct of international agribusiness is highly relevant. We agree with the Special Rapporteur that states should seek to prohibit practices which are particularly detrimental to suppliers.

Obviously, more can be done by business. We agree that it can be considered as misleading advertising when companies adopt various codes of conduct and fail to implement them. Public authorities should have a responsibility to monitor such compliance.

The Special Rapporteur points to the fact that proliferation of these codes has been such that it is now a challenge to coordinate and further harmonize multiple private initiatives. Questions are also raised as to the quality of the codes of conducts. Norway is worried that this multitude of initiatives may serve to diffuse the issue.

We need to study the Special Rapporteur's specific proposals more closely. We have noted with interest his recommendations to re-engage in public regulations of global food chains to guarantee that standards developed by private sector do not have unintended negative effect on the realization of the right to food.

As plantations and contract farming increase the distinction between paid workers and farmers is breaking down. To us, the role of the state as regulator thus becomes even more important to meet this challenge.

The Special Rapporteur stresses the needs of smallholders. In this respect, there is one issue that could have been given more space: As we all know, in small-scale agriculture, women play a significant role. We would have liked to see comments from the Special Rapporteur in his report as to how modern agribusiness effect women's position in society.

Norway is committed to promoting the right to food and support the work of the special rapporteur. A comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the trends in modern agribusiness and the situation of suppliers in developing countries is imperative for the realization of the right to food.

Thank you.