

Chair, Members of the Committee, we are grateful for this opportunity to contribute to this important session on Climate Change. I am the Director for Humanitarian Programming with Trocaire. I have worked in development and humanitarian contexts for more than twenty years.

I have two messages I would like to leave with you today. **The first is that climate change is already a crisis in the most vulnerable countries in the world. Climate change is already impacting significantly on hunger and nutrition and without tackling the underlying causes of climate change hunger is expected to increase in the coming decades. Reducing global emissions, protecting people's livelihoods and investing in resilience is essential to protect food security in the context of a changing climate.**

We are increasingly aware here in Ireland of our vulnerability to extreme, erratic weather. Imagine if you can if the forecast was not one of a week of snow, but of an entire season of drought, following a season of drought. In East Africa this has become an increasingly familiar forecast. Imagine if you can if you were dependent on the rain to grow enough food to feed your family, and send the children to school. Drought is an insidious crisis. By the time a drought hits the headlines families have been doing everything they can for months to cope. Selling their livestock or tools – their equivalent of bank savings, taking the children out of school to work, migrating temporarily in search of work. As the gap between droughts in East Africa decreases, families are unable to recover before the next one hits. The result is a downward spiral of poverty, hunger and vulnerability.

Extreme weather has affected livelihoods for communities in all of the following countries 2015/16:

- Ethiopia – drought and food shortages
- Somalia – drought and food shortages, flash floods,
- Kenya – drought and food shortages, flash floods
- South Sudan – drought and food shortages, flash floods
- Malawi – drought and food shortages, heavy flooding
- Sierra Leone – heavy flooding/land slides
- Myanmar – heavy flooding/landslides
- Pakistan – heavy flooding/drought
- Guatemala – floods & landslides
- Honduras – floods
- Nicaragua – drought/floods

Trocaire and other agencies are providing humanitarian aid when needed and working with communities to help them adapt their agricultural practices, strengthen their Natural Resource Management, and to diversify their incomes to increase their resilience. **Humanitarian response, and development work to increase resilience is critical and must be scaled up. However, this alone will not be enough. We must avoid reaching the point beyond which people can adapt and survive.**

This brings me to my second key message. **Hunger is caused by poverty, not by inadequate food supply.** Poverty in the form of lack of economic resources to buy food, and or lack of the resources, such as land and tools, to grow it. The world currently produces enough to feed the global population, yet the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, or one in nine, were suffering from chronic

undernourishment in 2014-2016. Almost all the hungry people, 780 million, lived in developing countries, representing 12.9 percent, or one in eight at that point, of the population of developing countries. In our experience those worst affected by malnutrition are young children, resulting in long-term impacts, and older people. When men are forced to migrate in search of work the impacts on families are devastating. The burden is borne heavily by women, who are left to protect the livelihood, the household and the family.

The 1996 World Food Summit where leaders gathered under the auspices of the UN Food and Agricultural Agency, defined food security as existing when : *“all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”*. Importantly, this definition recognises that food security is about access to food, not the availability of food.

Eradicating hunger in areas of the developing world that experience it, and that are already today experiencing increasing food insecurity as a result of climate change, requires a series of responses at various levels. Key amongst these, it requires increasing the resilience of food production to the impacts of climate change in these regions themselves, to increase local incomes and access to food.

With this understanding, if we are concerned about food security in the context of a changing climate, we must be concerned first and foremost with ensuring that all countries, including Ireland, fulfil their obligations under the Paris Agreement to hold the rise in average temperature to well below 2 degrees, aiming for 1.5 degrees, and with ensuring the countries and communities experiencing increasing food insecurity as a result of climate impacts are supported to adapt. As the then Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki Moon, highlighted in his visit to Ireland in 2015, *“Ireland has been a champion of efforts to counter hunger, but today one cannot be a leader on hunger without also being a leader in climate change.”*