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## REPORT

### FOR THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY

*"The OSCE: Addressing New Security Challenges"*

RAPPORTEUR  
Mr Riccardo Migliori  
Italy

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## **“The food crisis and security in the OSCE area”**

### **Report by Mr. Riccardo Migliori, Rapporteur of the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security**

One of the pillars of the Helsinki Final Act was and still is the notion of the “indivisibility” of security. This principle means that security is an overarching issue, and that the security of any single State cannot be pursued to the detriment of another.

Such an assumption also implies that shared values require a shared effort, a shared commitment to security that all OSCE countries – on equal footing – must abide by.

In other words, “indivisibility” implies that we are all “producers and consumers of security” at the same time and in the same way.

Over the decades, the “indivisibility” of security has shifted from applying merely to territories or States to transversally encompassing the challenges posed indiscriminately by globalisation to all OSCE countries.

Today, the indivisibility of security means a shared stance to counter large-scale organised crime, terrorism, cyber attacks and the financial crisis.

It is precisely the current global financial crisis, one that has also become an economic and social crisis, which helps us better understand the new indivisible security challenges and the multipolar, inclusive approach that offers the best possible way of combating them.

One new and major challenge is that of food self-sufficiency, and the related political issue of food security.

In 2008 a number of serious incidents broke out in many countries, including in Mediterranean area Egypt and Tunisia, primarily due to the marked increase in grain prices. Some Asian countries blocked rice exports. Some wealthy Nations blocked exports, and some supermarkets even limited purchases to four units per person to avoid hoarding.

Alongside the concerning question of famine is the dangerous neocolonialist logic that sees Governments and banks buying up millions of hectares to produce food abroad, thus leading to a crisis for local producers and to a serious loss of food self-sufficiency in certain countries.

This great race to control foreign staple-food production has proven one of the latest trends in the global economy. OSCE countries too have been targeted by such investments from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

On 28 April 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon established a Task Force on the food crisis, geared towards providing States with a single, united response to food security issues.

On 3-5 June 2008, the FAO organised the Conference on World Food Security in Rome, attended by 181 countries, and on 27 January last in Madrid, 126 countries united in calling for “food security for all” in the “Madrid Declaration”.

Our Parliaments and Governments, and indeed the OSCE itself, cannot simply sit on the sidelines passively observing this great challenge unfold.

The reasons why all this is happening are simple: crops used for fuel are more lucrative than those grown for food; there has been a marked reduction in arable land; biofuels are becoming increasingly popular; natural disasters are taking their toll; rural populations are in sharp decline; and there has been an exponential rise in demand for food from India and China. It is necessary therefore that, while respecting fundamental economic freedoms, we discourage huge investments that result in the expulsion of the rural population and undermine food sovereignty.

The effects of these developments are equally clear: rising food prices, which affect the poorest inhabitants of both the strongest and – more seriously – the weakest economies. According to figures from the World Bank, wheat prices went up by 120% in one year, and rice prices increased by 75% in two months. Global grain stocks are dwindling. According to the FAO, in 2008 an extra 1035 billion dollars were spent on food imports and, most significantly, low income countries increased imports by 40%.

All this spells instability, damages fundamental rights, exacerbates conflicts and makes for unacceptable inequality. The lack of food and water affects most of all the weakest part of poor societies, not only children but also women, who in the most difficult situations continue to deal with the burden of family care and are left alone by the heads of the family because of work reasons or due to wars.

The UN estimates that 100 million people are at risk of dying due to rising food prices. Conflict prevention and the peaceful solution of frozen conflicts is also essential to ensure food security.

After years of decline, the number of starving people on our planet has risen to 850,000,000. Moreover, the Rome Declaration of 1996 on food security, that sought to halve the number of malnourished people by 2015, is far from achieving its goals.

The issue of food security must therefore become a top priority on the OSCE's agenda, because fundamental political and human rights are useless without a pre-emptive right to food! Greater commitment is required from Governments, Parliaments and donors. In the Millennium Development Goals 189 countries undertook to allocate 0.7% of GDP by 2015 to fighting poverty: this target can still be reached.

The last G8 set itself the task of establishing a global network of food and agriculture experts: research centers and universities can offer a huge contribution to this activity.

IFAD (the International Fund for Agricultural Development) has earmarked over 200 million dollars for a project to transfer seeds to developing countries.

On 10 March 2008, the FAO/EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) Conference held in London discussed support mechanisms for the residual potential of agricultural production in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, where 13 out of a total 23 million hectares of previously farmed land could immediately be re-used.

The main slogan for Milan's Expo 2015 will be "Feeding the planet – Energy for life".

The first G8 Agricultural Ministers meeting took place in Italy on 18-20 April 2009, with an overall agreement on the strategies to fight famine and to support food security.

These are all examples of new and concrete political focus on the issue of food security which are varied in background and breadth, and which involve different players and geographical regions.

The OSCE's expertise, and above all the Parliamentary Assembly – given its influence and prestige – can play a significant role in coordinating, moving forward and raising awareness on this issue.

This is a great challenge that requires great political courage.