



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on Population and Development

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Population, food security, nutrition and  
sustainable development

### Statement submitted by Commonwealth Medical Trust, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council<sup>1</sup>

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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<sup>1</sup> The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Even before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, eradicating hunger and achieving food security was a major challenge to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The situation, moreover, has been exacerbated not only by COVID-19 but also by the additional problems of climate shocks and the desert locust crisis in Eastern African countries and Yemen.

COVID-19 is having profound impacts on the health of millions of people in many locations and is likely to intensify in the coming months. Beyond this, people's suffering has been exacerbated by the extreme measures taken in some settings to prevent even more extreme outbreaks of the disease. These have included various forms of movement restrictions – affecting more than half the world's population in early 2020. These restrictions have severely affected the lives of the poorest in society, particularly millions of children and women. Being unable to work for those on meagre daily wages has meant going for a day or more without eating. Lack of nutritious food particularly affects the health of pregnant and lactating women and their babies. Even in more affluent countries, keeping children out of school has deprived them not only of their education, but also of the one nutritious meal of the day. Workers in certain food industries, including meat processing, have been subjected to higher levels of infection due to the conditions in which they work. At the national and global levels, supply chains have broken due to problems with transportation of goods by sea and land.

Individuals, civil society organizations and intergovernmental bodies have played a significant part in addressing the immediate impacts of the pandemic from the efforts of a well-known footballer to get free school meals for poor children in the school holidays; to the food banks run by communities which have been used with increasing frequency; and to the ongoing work of the World Food Programme, which has been recognized by the awarding of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.

The achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (which addresses hunger, food security and improved nutrition) is critical to the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is therefore important that national authorities fully address relevant targets for functioning food systems in their plans and programmes to 'Build Back Better' in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only then will no child or young person have to echo the memorable words of Charles Dickens in his 19th century novel, *Oliver Twist*, by asking "Please, sir, I want some more".

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