Canada: Hunger amidst plenty? First visit to a developed country by the UN right to food expert

GENEVA (3 May 2012) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, will conduct an official visit to Canada from 6 to 16 May 2012 in order to gain an understanding of the steps taken by the authorities to implement the right to food.

The visit will mark the first visit that the UN expert has undertaken to a developed country.

“Canada has taken steps to spread the benefits of economic development across its diverse regions and populations. Yet even where average standards of living are high, it is crucial to examine food systems as a whole, and to ask whether they respond to the needs, and secure the ‘rights,’ of all people and where there are gaps,” Mr. De Schutter said.

“Challenges remain to ensure that food is adequate, accessible and affordable for marginalized groups, be they poor urban populations or Aboriginal peoples,” he noted. “Ensuring that food systems are democratic and equitable means paying attention to the way food supply chains are organized and the social safety nets that are in place.”

The Special Rapporteur stressed that developed countries also bear important obligations of international cooperation when it comes to securing the right to food. “The terms of the trade agreements that Canada engages in, and the nature of its food aid and development commitments, can have huge impacts on the ability of populations worldwide to produce or to procure food.”

During his eleven-day visit, Mr. De Schutter will consider the right-to-food situation across the country through meetings with federal, provincial and municipal officials as well as farmer, food, development and human rights organizations in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton. He will also visit Aboriginal communities and meet with their representatives in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

The Special Rapporteur will present his preliminary observations on the visit at a
press conference on 16 May at 10:30 at the National Press Theatre (150 Wellington Street) in Ottawa.

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Olivier De Schutter was appointed the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in May 2008 by the United Nations Human Rights Council. He is independent from any government or organization. Learn more, log on to: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/FoodIndex.aspx or www.srfood.org

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