

The First UN Private Sector Forum, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Food Sustainability,

NY, September 24, 2008

Statement by Talal Abu-Ghazaleh

FIRST,

Allow me to address the global food crisis from my business prospective, as a leading group of professional service providers (including consultancy) in Asia and Africa.

1: More than aid, what is needed and would be more appreciated, is assistance in developing sustainable and feasible for profit projects involving land owners, government, investors and other stakeholders, bringing together all the ICT-based needed resources.

2: There is an abundance of untapped fertile land in Asia and Africa, just like the rest of the world. What we need are business initiatives rather than assistance policies and advice, and ICT-based implementations to convert these lands to become food producers for local consumption and export.

3: In addition to direct food assistance to government, I urge you to consider establishing a food fund, funded by some of the ODA contribution, for the purpose of investing in ICT-enabled food production facilities in countries that need it.

4: FAO and other UN agencies can act as catalyst, knowledge bank and oversight agencies for such local and regional business led enterprises.

SECOND,

I know, through my professional work, many success stories that were the result of on the ground implementations of small and large projects with the right leadership more than the right assistance. Examples:

- 1- Guarantee the purchase of crop produce from farmers at market prices (milk, olive, tomato... etc) for processing and marketing businesses initiatives.

- 2- Establish agro industrial, packaging, marketing, transporting and other needed facilities which the individual farmers cannot run on their own.
- 3- Bring together farmers in a region into a collective society and continuing to own land masses feasible for sustainable projects to be implemented on rental or sharing or franchise basis to major investors.

THIRD,

We need to:

- 1- Help develop national food production capacities.
- 2- Help implement on ground of food production businesses.
- 3- Invest some ODA into sustainable national food production businesses.
- 4- To all of that in an ICT enabled environment.

FOURTH,

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization is committed to work closely with the governments, business, land owners and other stakeholders, within the 22 Arab Countries and in between them, such that TAGorg will through its offices in all these countries bring together the right mix of partners suitable for each project and each country. Outsourcing of agricultural production and agro-industry is a very viable approach through bringing surplus funds from countries to countries rich with agricultural potential and accordingly partnering for their mutual benefits. We are providing Consulting and Project Management along these lines and will continue to do so proactively. We know it can be done because we are doing it.

FIFTH,

The following key issues need to be explored because they are crucial to the success of this proposal:

1. How can rural access and connectivity advance the goal of food sustainability?
2. How can training and capacity building support the achievement of the MDGs in health, education and poverty reduction?

3. How can rich local contained development overcome the barriers to information, knowledge development and dissemination, relevant to local needs and conditions?

Thank you,

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh