

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
The Secretary-General
The United Nations
New York, NY 10017

October 24, 2011

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

We write concerning the alarming revelation by Wikileaks that the World Food Program had sent urgent letters to your predecessor warning that Jean Ziegler, a UN Human Rights Council official tasked with combating hunger, has engaged in “profoundly immoral” actions and “inflammatory” politics that endanger the lives of millions of starving people worldwide.

We urge you to (a) commission an international and independent inquiry to determine who in the United Nations knew about this detailed warning, and why no remedial actions were taken to remove Mr. Ziegler, and prevent him from further harming the lives of hungry people; (b) demand that Mr. Ziegler immediately resign from all of his UNHRC responsibilities, especially those relating to hunger; and (c) take steps to ensure that Mr. Ziegler’s successor, Olivier de Schutter, refrains from following a similar path.

We enclose here one of the letters, dated 24 October 2002, from World Food Program Executive Director James T. Morris to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. An earlier letter to Mr. Annan by his predecessor, WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini, is referenced therein but has not yet been made public.

The enclosed WFP letter makes the most severe accusations against Jean Ziegler, who was the UN Human Right Council Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for the period 2000-2008. Mr. Ziegler continues to serve the UN Human Rights Council as a member of its Advisory Committee and to perform mandates for it concerning the right to food.

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As you know, the World Food Program is the food aid arm of the United Nations system, the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, feeding more than 90 million people in more than 70 countries.

In the enclosed letter, the World Food Program—the genuine expert on hunger—accuses Mr. Ziegler of making it “harder rather than easier for WFP to help hungry people fulfill their right to food in emergencies.” Mr. Ziegler, says the WFP, is “playing politics with aid,” and his actions and statements are “profoundly immoral” and “unconscionable.”

According to the World Food Program, the “clearly inflammatory politics played by Mr. Ziegler has had a negative impact on the lives of the hungry.” Moreover, Mr. Ziegler’s “public statements and the reports he has submitted to the General Assembly show a serious lack of understanding of economics and the details of the food situation in the areas he professes to analyze on behalf of the High Commissioner.”

The Wikileaks cable also reveals that the late UN rights chief Sergio de Mello, in a meeting with WFP Acting Deputy Executive Director Jean Jacques Graisse, reportedly expressed “considerable exasperation with Ziegler,” saying that “the man had taken up half of [de Mello’s] time since entering office.

In 2004, UN Watch published detailed reports on Mr. Ziegler’s record which corroborated the World Food Program’s disturbing findings, including our report “Blind to Burundi: Jean Ziegler’s Neglect of the World's Food Emergencies.” We also documented Mr. Ziegler’s propaganda on behalf of the Gaddafi regime, including his key role in founding, managing and receiving the “Muammar Al-Gaddafi International Prize for Human Rights.” Tragically, even as the UN was in possession of WFP’s expert substantiation of this information, the world body ignored our appeals for action. Millions of hungry people have suffered as a result.

In light of the above, we respectfully urge you (a) to create an international and independent commission of inquiry to determine who in the United Nations knew about this detailed warning, and why no remedial actions were taken to remove Mr. Ziegler and prevent him from further harming the lives of hungry people; and (b) to call on Mr. Ziegler to resign from all of his ongoing UNHRC responsibilities, especially those relating to hunger.

In addition, we are concerned about actions by Mr. Ziegler’s successor, Mr. Olivier de Schutter, which seem to follow at least some of the same politicized agenda and misplaced priorities. For example, Mr. de Schutter is planning to conduct a special country visit to Canada in May 2012. However, he has refused to answer questions by UN Watch as to why a UN champion for starving people should be wasting precious time and resources visiting Canada, instead of spotlighting countries that *do* have food emergencies, such as Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Like Mr. Ziegler, who was often confused by media agencies with being the UNHRC expert on Palestine, Mr. de Schutter has repeatedly misused his mandate on hunger to

make one-sided and political attacks on Israel that lack a genuine nexus to his mandate. For example, on July 7 of this year, Mr. de Schutter went so far as to issue a pre-emptive attack on one of your own statements, in a press release marked “Urgent” and entitled “UN Special Rapporteur opposes Ban Ki-Moon's conclusions on flotilla.” It is rare for a UN rapporteur to attack a statement by the UN Secretary-General, and unprecedented to do so by anticipatory action.

Mr. de Schutter’s recent report on Syria, while mentioning several problems there, raises serious questions about his approach. The report takes pains to repeatedly praise and “commend” the Assad regime. “The Special Rapporteur commends the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for its cooperation during the mission”; “The Special Rapporteur commends the efforts made to support agri-food economic activities with added value (for example, cheese-making)”; and the Special Rapporteur “applauded the efforts of the Government of Syria in seeking to provide food security to its population.”

Instead, Mr. de Schutter reserves his harshest language to attack the international community for its “unacceptably poor” response to Syrian drought, and to attack Israel for controlling the Golan Heights, which de Schutter inexplicably categorized as one of Syria’s three “huge challenges” regarding hunger.

Accordingly, we urge you to take steps to ensure that Mr. de Schutter refrains from following the same path as his predecessor.

There are millions of hungry people worldwide. They need the UN’s urgent help, not inflammatory politics. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Hillel C. Neuer
Executive Director

Encl.

Wikileaks: Letter from World Food Program to Kofi Annan

Source: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=02ROME5540>

Letter from World Food Program Executive Director James T. Morris to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, dated October 24, 2002. Emphasis added.

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

Knowing how busy you are, I regret having to take your time on this issue, but since I arrived here at the World Food Programme, I have been following with some concern the public statements of Jean Ziegler, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. In particular, I was disturbed by the attached release by Reuters which gives the impression that Mr. Ziegler speaks on behalf of the United Nations. You will note in the text that Mr. Ziegler has attacked the agreed position of the United Nations and the views of the director-general of WHO on GM/Biotech foods and he has done so without citing any scientific authorities, studies or reports. WFP staff in Geneva confirmed directly with him that the substance of the Reuters report was correct and that he had not been misquoted.

The last thing we need right now in Southern Africa—or anywhere for that matter—is for someone whose credentials are in sociology and law to pass judgment on the scientific competency of the World Health Organization or other UN bodies which have studied the issue of GM foods with care and continue to do so. It is especially disturbing when the media associates these views directly with the United Nations. Does Mr. Ziegler seriously believe that if GM foods are banned from food aid that no one will go hungry when nearly 70 percent of global food aid comes from countries where maize and soy are very often GM and 60 to 70 percent of processed foods have some biotech content?

This is not the first disturbing public pronouncement by Mr. Ziegler that has made it harder rather than easier for WFP to help hungry people fulfill their right to food in emergencies. My predecessor, Catherine Bertini, wrote to

you earlier about his statements promoting the idea that food aid was being diverted to the military and endorsing the withdrawal of aid by NGOs like MSF from North Korea because the government there refused to grant aid workers complete access to the entire country. Well, we agree that full access must remain the shared goal of all humanitarian workers in the DPRK, but **playing politics with aid is profoundly immoral**. To withdraw food aid and medicine from needy people because of the actions of any regime is unconscionable.

Politics can assist or impede efforts to see that people have access to food. I would submit that **the clearly inflammatory politics played by Mr. Ziegler has had a negative impact on the lives of the hungry**—donors have certainly questioned WFP after his interventions on the DPRK and Southern Africa.

In fact, as you well know, we continue to have trouble raising resources for the DPRK and have recently been forced to cut the rations of 3 million children and the elderly.

I would also like to bring to your attention another release by Interpress Service (attached). While we appreciated his compliment to WFP and do not disagree with several points he makes, does Mr. Ziegler believe that repeated public railings against the Bretton Woods institutions and multinational corporations will encourage them to cooperate with the United Nations in promoting the right to food? **His public statements and the reports he has submitted to the General Assembly show a serious lack of understanding of economics and the details of the food situation in the areas he professes to analyze on behalf of the High Commissioner.**

I have copied this letter to Mr. Sergio de Mello for his consideration. I hope you will give some thought to the possibility of discussing this issue with him. There are so many talented, responsible, and humane people who could do an excellent job as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. At the international food policy research institute

and at major universities, there are a number of experts who understand the complexity of food security issues and whose careers have demonstrated a commitment—not to publicity—but to finding solutions to the chronic hunger that still afflicts the lives of so many of the world's poor.

Sincerely,
James Morris, WFP Executive Director

Comment to letter by U.S. Mission in Rome:

WFP'S ACTING DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEAN JACQUES GRAISSE REPORTEDLY MET INFORMALLY WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS HIGH COMMISSIONER VIEIRA DE MELLO ON THE ZIEGLER "PROBLEM." **DE MELLO REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE EXASPERATION WITH ZIEGLER SAYING THAT THE MAN HAD TAKEN UP HALF OF HIS (I.E., DE MELLO'S) TIME SINCE ENTERING OFFICE,** BUT BLAMING THE MEMBER STATES FOR SELECTING HIM. USMISSION FULLY ENDORSES THE POSITION TAKEN BY WFP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STATE REFTTEL CITED ABOVE.