

**Remarks for the Inter-Active Dialogue on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food,
Olivier De Schutter, Mission to Canada**

**Delivered by Bruce Porter, on behalf of: the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, the
Social Rights Advocacy Centre, Amnesty International Canada, Canada Without Poverty, Action
Canada on Population and Development and Food Secure Canada**

Mr. President,

Our organizations welcome the Report of Mr. De Schutter on his Mission to Canada and we fully endorse his recommendations. In fact, hundreds of individuals affected by hunger and poverty are congregating in over fifty gatherings across Canada today to engage with Mr. De Schutter by webcast. They want to see the Canadian government act. We hope that Canada's upcoming UPR on April 26th will be an opportunity for Canada to commit to implementing these important recommendations.

As Mr. De Schutter documented, we have a serious human rights crisis of hunger and poverty in Canada, despite being one of the wealthiest countries in the world. 8 per cent of households, over four million people are food insecure. Social assistance levels are far below the cost of living. Minimum wages do not permit families to provide adequate or nutritious food. Indigenous peoples suffer disproportionate rates of malnourishment, obesity and diabetes. 900,000 individuals rely each month on emergency food banks – more than ever before.

As a crucial first step Mr. De Schutter calls for a comprehensive rights-based national food strategy. We strongly support this, along with the many other critical recommendations.

Given the serious issues identified by Mr. De Schutter, we were shocked by the initial response from the Government of Canada to Mr. De Schutter's End of Mission Statement. Government Ministers derided him for coming to Canada. One Minister stated that "It would be our hope that the contributions we make to the United Nations are used to help starving people in developing countries, not to give lectures to wealthy and developed countries like Canada and I think this is a discredit to the United Nations."

Mr. Chairperson, all countries, rich and poor, must be held accountable to the standard of progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights "to the maximum of available resources." Canada has clearly failed to meet that obligation with respect to the right to adequate food. However, if Canada would agree to take its human rights obligations seriously, to engage in good faith with UN procedures and to take on board the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, these human rights violations can be ended. We look forward to a more constructive approach in the future and look forward to working with all levels of government in Canada to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations as expeditiously as possible.

Question: We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur if he has concerns about the procedures for implementing recommendations from UN human rights bodies in Canada and the availability of effective remedies to violations of the right to food in Canada. THANK YOU.