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PRESS CONTACT

JANUARY 27, 2009

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Mobilizing political will to eradicate hunger: a quest for the Holy Grail?

Madrid, Spain – *The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's Alexandra Spielloch and Anne Laure Constantin attended the Madrid High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All. At the conclusion of the meeting, IATP issued the following statement:*

"Another high-level meeting on food security has just ended in Madrid (Jan 26 – 27, 2009) and yet the world still lacks a clear understanding of what's needed to end hunger. Representatives from the international community met to intensify their efforts to mobilize resources and to develop a plan.

There is considerable progress in how governments talk about agriculture's role in development, and about the need to involve farmers' organizations in policy-making. However, beyond broad and encouraging principles, the meeting lacked substance. Most importantly, the Madrid meeting failed to:

- Recognize the need for a paradigm shift in agriculture production. Discussions focused on the important need to increase funding for agriculture and food security strategies. But there were no discussions – save for a resounding speech by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter – on the failure of existing food systems to respond to the hunger challenge. "The challenge is not merely a technical one, it is also political," de Schutter said.
- Jumpstart a serious discussion about the need to rethink production models, as advised by the recent International Assessment on Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Immediate action to support more intensive agriculture will worsen, not improve the food crisis.
- Provide clarity about the goal of the proposed "Global partnership for agriculture, food security and nutrition." If developed countries are serious about achieving an inclusive process to frame the partnership, they need to provide the UN High Level Task Force (UNHLTF) with adequate levels of funding to allow for wider participation. There was no discussion about how to increase participation during the meeting.

All in all, this meeting was both a window of opportunity and a lost moment for bridging the gaps between the different actors. With close to one billion hungry in the world and that number growing by the day, nothing less than a global call to action driven by multi-stakeholders to reform the global food system is needed.

IATP is convinced that a new global contract for food and agriculture is required. The new global effort to address hunger, though, must include a critical look at what has failed in the past and shift course. The time is now, the world cannot wait and we must act justly and fairly together."

IATP works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.