

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0038/08

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Josep Borrell Fontelles, on behalf of the Committee on Development, Reimer Böge, on behalf of the Committee on Budgets
to the Council

Subject: Soaring food prices and food aid operations in developing countries

Food prices have risen dramatically, as have fuel and transport costs, drastically reducing the purchasing power of broad sectors of society in developing countries and of food aid agencies. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that at least USD 500m of additional funds is needed in the coming weeks to ensure that the scheduled programmes for 2008 can be implemented. According to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of 18 December 2007, the European Union 'aims to demonstrate its commitment to humanitarian response by mobilising adequate funding for humanitarian aid based on assessed need' (para. 38 of the Consensus).

1. How does the Council intend to support the prompt mobilisation of funds in order to ensure that the food aid operations are not interrupted in 2008 and that additional food aid requirements caused by soaring food prices can be met? What concrete steps have been undertaken to mobilise additional (Community) funds, such as from the emergency aid reserve, in particular for providing swift support to the WFP?
2. Does the Council consider that the EC humanitarian aid budget planned by the Commission for 2009, in particular regarding food aid, will be sufficient to uphold the EU's humanitarian commitments in the course of 2009, in light of the fact that food prices are expected to remain high or even increase further? What steps are envisaged to ensure that humanitarian aid operations supported by the EU, in particular its food aid operations in developing countries, respond to needs arising?
3. What is the Council's assessment of the food security and humanitarian aid challenges in light of the mid-term review of the 2007-2013 Financial Framework?

Tabled: 15.04.2008

Forwarded: 16.04.2008

Deadline for reply: 07.05.2008