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## UN, Jimmy Carter Say Time Is Ripe to End Hunger

John Roach  
[National Geographic News](#)  
March 14, 2005

The time is now for the richest nations to share their cash, food, and knowledge with the hundreds of millions of people enduring extreme poverty and hunger, according a recent UN report.

"Millions of people die annually of hunger and hunger-related diseases, and many millions more suffer needlessly where famine is preventable," Jimmy Carter, 39th President of the United States and 2002 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, told National Geographic News.

President Carter said his work with the Atlanta, Georgia-based Carter Center over the past 20 years demonstrates that, with modest outside help, the hungry and poor can take control of their lives. If ignored, however, they may be moved to violence, he said.

"When a person's basic human needs—food, shelter, clean water, access to health care—are not available, there is a deterioration of the heart and soul. People experience hopelessness, and some may resort to conflict to achieve change," he said in a statement to National Geographic News.

### Halving Hunger

National Geographic News asked President Carter to comment on why the developed world should care about and commit funding to fight global hunger, in light of a recent United Nations report urging developed nations to take immediate action on the issue.

Halving world hunger by 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) unanimously approved by the 191 member states of the United Nations in 2000. Other goals are to slash rates of poverty, disease, and related ills.

In January of this year, the UN-sponsored Millennium Project released a series of recommendations on how to best achieve the MDGs, including the hunger target.

According to the recommendations of the project's Hunger Task Force, hunger can be halved if every person in the developed world contributes 60 U.S. cents per month toward programs that increase agricultural productivity and address chronic malnutrition.

Pedro Sanchez is the director of Tropical Agriculture at the Columbia University Earth Institute in New York and co-chair of the Millennium Project's Hunger Task Force.

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Children play among thriving Sasakawa Global 2000 cornfields in Ghana. The agricultural program, also known as SG 2000, provides the tools and means to help farmers in sub-Saharan Africa increase their crop yields, sometimes two- or even threefold. By increasing the amount of quality food produced, program organizers hope, poverty will be lessened, food security enhanced, and national resources protected.

*Photograph courtesy the Carter Center*

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He said that, while the report demonstrates that the goal is achievable, "it's not going to happen unless the world comes to grips with this politically."

According to the task force's report, political leaders made commitments to halve world hunger at five humanitarian-themed summit meetings between 1996 and 2002. What's lacking is action to implement and increase known solutions to meet those commitments.

Joachim von Braun, director general of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, D.C., and a member of the Millennium Project's Hunger Task Force, echoed Sanchez's call for action on political commitments to halve hunger.

Von Braun co-authored a report presented to the January meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The report gave global efforts to meet hunger-reduction targets a score of three out of a possible ten. "If things progress as they are currently, we will reach only one-third of the Millennium Development Goal," he said.

In addition to increased financial aid from the world's richest countries, the Hunger Task Force's report calls for political leaders in the developing world to create an enabling environment for the poor and hungry to support themselves.

"We cannot expect to be successful in places that are in war. We cannot expect to be successful in places that have absolute theocracy like Zimbabwe. No way, that's impossible. We have to wait for those countries to change first," Sanchez said.

Meanwhile, Sanchez said, it is crucial to work with countries like the African nations of Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar, which have demonstrated a readiness to end hunger.

#### Effective Programs

Since 1986 the Carter Center has been working with the Sasakawa Africa Association to teach farmers agricultural techniques that double or triple their crop yields. The program, known as Sasakawa Global 2000, has reached more than four million farmers in 15 sub-Saharan African countries.

"Agriculture stimulates positive change, proving that when we share our resources and knowledge with others, they can be empowered to help themselves and can overcome obstacles that once seemed insurmountable," Carter said.

Other programs the Hunger Task Force recommends include providing all schoolchildren with free lunches made from locally produced foods and improving roads and communications to give local farmers access to the global marketplace.

"A major priority has to come in making markets work for the poor and increasing productivity of small farmers. Ending hunger cannot be achieved just by a massive global feeding program," von Braun said.

According to Sanchez, studies show that for every dollar of increased agricultural productivity in developing countries, those countries import 73 cents worth of goods from rich countries.

"Let's modify the whole Chinese saying of, 'Give a person a fish and they will fish for a day; teach a person how to fish and they'll eat for a lifetime,' and add, 'they'll buy fishing equipment, they'll get into the marketplace,' he

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