**Children and Youth, Food Systems and Human Rights**

On behalf of children and youth worldwide and the International NGO **Ariel Foundation International** (AFI) with Special ECOSOC Status. This statement on *Food Systems and Human Rights* is written by AFI Children and Youth Ambassadors

AFI Children and Youth Ambassadors believe that one of the major problems plaguing our food systems in various counties, including but not limited to the Americas (United States, South and Central America) is the presence of healthy “Food Deserts” in and “Food Insecurity” expansive geographic areas. Food deserts are expansive areas in which there is little to no access to healthy and nutritious food at affordable prices. Instead, there are fast food restaurants, tobacco and alcohol shops, and low quality or non-existent fresh foods in food stores.

A social consequence of living in a food desert for children and youth could be a high death in the area and high levels of chronic illness as a result of impaired access to healthy and affordable foods. One of the consequences of this poor health is premature deaths. Most areas with a high population of food deserts also see a high infant mortality rate as a result. A prime example of this is in Mississippi which has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the US and also has a high amount of food deserts in the state.

In some parts of the world we find crippling food insecurity for both economic and/or political reasons. Food insecurity is the state of having lack of access to fresh quality, nutritious and affordable foods. A political reason for this might be an internal civil war which could potentially have devastating effects on food insecurity since lands would be occupied by military forces and people would become displaced, causing farmers to leave their farms to fend for their lives.

An environmental reason that food insecurity could be rampant is if a country is a majority dry or arid area. In a country with desert, it is impossible to grow any food in the land without a vast amount of irrigation. This poses a threat to food production as farmers cannot plant crops and get a yield in the dry areas, making arable land limited. This coupled with the low technological development of crops in some countries makes it hard for farmers to keep their soils rich and produce crops year after year. Thus, making the yield of crops lower, and thus prices higher and nutritious fresh foods less affordable and accessible.

The social and political capital that will be generated with the Food Systems Summit with children and youth participation would allow for greater partnerships and actions for better fresh food systems in communities across the world. It is up to young leaders to make sure this happens by petitioning their governments and actively advocating for change.

**Ariel Foundation International Changemakers Children’s Summits** ([www.arielfoundation.org](http://www.arielfoundation.org))

**AFI Young Changemakers on the 46th Human Rights Council at the United Nations Publication.**

<https://issuu.com/arielfoundation/docs/afi_young_changemakers_at_the_46th_human_rights_co>