

OFFICE REGISTRY

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Recipients : SPB
U. H. H. Steen
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October 9, 2012

Prof. Olivier de Schutter
Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Genève 10
Geneva, Switzerland

and

Dr. Cephas Lumina
Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt and
other International Financial Obligations of states
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Genève 10
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Prof. de Schutter and Dr. Lumina:

Thank you for your letter to the President of the World Bank dated August 10, 2012, in connection with the alleged human rights impacts of the privatization of Burundi's coffee industry and the role of the Bank in that process. On the President's behalf, we wish to assure you that we appreciate the importance of the issues you raised. We are pleased to respond in the spirit of cooperation between our two institutions.

Your letter suggests a link between the Bank's support for privatization in the coffee industry in Burundi and the alleged negative effects on access to food for the local population, which you characterize as a human rights violation. Your main concern appears to be captured in the statement that "*changes in wages and payments for coffee and coffee processing can have significant impacts on the ability of the population to purchase food and meet their food needs*" and that "*the privatization of the coffee industry is increasing this vulnerability.*" As you are undoubtedly aware, the core determinant of the wages and payments farmers receive is the price of coffee in the international market, which is determined by an array of forces beyond the influence of the Government and the Bank. This price is in turn used in the formula for calculating payments eventually made to farmers. The Bank is not aware of information that suggests there has been a reduction in wages and payments to coffee farmers. Further, there is no evidence of a direct causal link between the Bank's support and the ability of such farmers to meet their food needs.