

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Ref.: OL GBR 11/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

28 July 2026

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the right to food, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 58/10.

In this connection, I wish to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to a number of legislative and policy measures adopted and under consideration in Scotland which bear upon the progressive realization of the right to food, and to convey several observations.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the constructive engagement that the mandate has maintained with the authorities of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including with the Scottish Government, throughout the years, as well as the continued attention devoted to the protection and advancement of human rights, including the right to adequate food as recognized in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which the United Kingdom is a party.

I recall, in this connection, that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its concluding observations on the United Kingdom of March 2025 (E/C.12/GBR/CO/7), acknowledged the several measures taken to provide for food and the necessary resources to ensure food security, noting that significant challenges remain, including increasing food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and limited access to affordable and nutritious food, which disproportionately affect low-income households, in particular families with children.

It is against this background that I welcome, and wish to offer certain observations upon, the measures described below.

I note with appreciation several developments in Scotland that give practical effect to the right to food, such as the provision of free school meals to children in primary school, introduced in phases between 2015 and 2022; the Scottish Child Payment, introduced in February 2021 and extended to all eligible children under the age of 16 in November 2022; and the Best Start Foods scheme, established in August 2019. Free school meals are currently provided on a universal basis to all children in the first five years of primary school (Primary 1 to Primary 5) and in special schools; pupils in the final two primary years (Primary 6 and Primary 7) have been eligible since February 2025 where their family receives the Scottish Child Payment; and, since August 2025, a trial in eight local authority areas has extended provision to pupils in the first three years of secondary school (S1 to S3) in receipt of that payment. These measures advance children's access to adequate and nutritious food, consistent with articles 24(2)(c) and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Noting the commitment, set out in the governing party's electoral programme, to extend free school meal provision to all primary-school children, I would encourage the Government to set out a clear and realistic timeframe for extending universal provision accordingly, and to guard against any retrogression in existing entitlements. Universal provision would include all children without means-testing, thereby avoiding the stigma and gaps in coverage that conditional schemes can produce.

I further welcome the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022, which received Royal Assent in July 2022, as an example of framework legislation of the kind encouraged by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has identified such legislation as a principal instrument for giving coherent effect to the right to food (general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food (art. 11), para. 29).

I note with satisfaction the publication of the first National Good Food Nation Plan in December 2025 and the establishment, in June 2025, of the statutory Scottish Food Commission with an oversight role.

With a view to the Act's implementation, I would draw attention to the importance of ensuring that the Plan is underpinned by measurable outcomes and indicators, including in respect of household food insecurity. I would further encourage that the right to adequate food, as recognized in article 11 of the Covenant, be made an explicit reference point in the Plan.

I have taken note of the proposal, advanced during the 2026 Scottish Parliament election and reaffirmed by the re-elected Government, to introduce legislation requiring larger retailers to offer a basket of essential food items at an affordable maximum price, with a view to improving the affordability of adequate food. According to the governing party's electoral campaign, the "Fair Food Price Plan" would set a maximum price for a basket of up to around 50 essential items in large supermarkets, with legislation intended within the year.

As the measure is developed, I would recommend that the composition of the basket reflects the requirements of a diverse, culturally acceptable and nutritionally adequate diet and that concentrated effort be dedicated to ensuring the basket reaches all those in greatest need.

I note the renewed commitment expressed by the Government, following the 2026 election, to introduce human rights legislation, incorporating a number of international human rights instruments into Scots law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As the Covenant enshrines the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food (article 11), its incorporation would provide a durable legal foundation for a rights-based food system and give domestic effect to the right in the manner the Committee has long encouraged, and as it recommended in its concluding observations of March 2025.

In connection with the above, I would be grateful for any information and observations your Excellency's Government may wish to provide on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned measures.
2. Please provide additional information about the anticipated timeframe for completing the extension of universal free school meal provision to all primary-school pupils.
3. Please clarify whether the forthcoming human rights legislation is envisaged to encompass the right to adequate food, and the anticipated timeframe for its introduction.

The mandate remains available to provide any advice and expertise in support of these efforts.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be transmitted to the relevant authorities, including the Scottish Government.

This communication, as a comment on pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies, and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) after 48 hours. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sofía Monsalve Suárez
Special Rapporteur on the right to food