**Press Release for Immediate Release (14 June 2016)**

**Scottish NGOs Intervene in UN Human Rights Examination**

This week (15-17 June 2016) an UN Committee will be examining the UK on the protection of socio-economic human rights, in which 6 Scottish NGOs will be intervening. [1]

Nourish Scotland will be raising concerns **on the right to food** – specifically on the impact of **social security reform and stagnant wages**, as well as on food related health inequalities and attainment, access to land to grow, and a number of environmental concerns including the use of chemicals and the risks posed to food security from climate change [2]. With 20% of people in Scotland living below the poverty line [3] and unable to afford to feed themselves healthily, urgent action is required.

Elli Kontorravdis, Policy and Campaigns Office at Nourish who is attending the examination, said “We’re very proud of having a positive human rights culture in Scotland, but there’s a lot of room for improvement on socio-economic rights, especially on the right to food.

Many of the concerns we’ll be raising with the UN stem from the UK Government’s relentless austerity measures – the harsh reform of social security has resulted in many vulnerable people simply not having enough money for food – this is a serious human rights issue and it disproportionately impacts women, children and disabled people.

Scotland is a land of plenty, there’s absolutely no reason why anyone in Scotland should be hungry or having to rely on charity to feed themselves”.

**On the responsibilities of Scottish Government**, Ms Kontorravdis said

“The Scottish Government has taken some important steps to support people affected by Westminster’s austerity programme but we should be doing more. The devolution of social security powers is a huge opportunity for the Scottish Government to take a rights-based approach towards ensuring everyone has enough money for food with dignity and choice.

Scotland could be a world leader in socio-economic rights. The SNP, Scottish Labour and the Scottish Greens made manifesto commitments to introduce a Food, Farming and Health Bill – this could bring much needed policy coherence and firmly embed the right to food in Scots Law”.

The UN Committee is expected to make its recommendations within the following week.

Last week a separate UN Committee made strong recommendations to the UK to take action on child poverty with specific reference to children living in food poverty. [4]

This week the Short Life Working Group on Food Poverty, set up by former Cabinet Secretary Alex Neil, will be publishing its recommendations to the Scottish Government.

This week Global Nutrition Report will release their 2016 report on ending malnutrition by 2030. [5]

- ENDS -

**Notes to Editor:**

The right to food is contained within the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – signed by the UK in 1976 but never incorporated in to our domestic legal system.

The Committee examining the UK is the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

One of the clearest breaches of the right to food is the lack of strategy to address household food insecurity. There is no national monitoring of household food insecurity in the UK; a recent UN report estimated it is in the region of 10%, estimates based on the poverty line suggest it could be as high as 21%. The growth of food banks gives an indication of more people experiencing food insecurity – in 2015/16 one emergency food provider, the Trussell Trust, gave out a record number of 1,109,309 3-day food parcels. [2]

The nutritional adequacy of food is another area in which the UK is performing badly on fulfilling the right to food, with 2/3 adults and 1/3 children overweight or obese. [2]

[1] Scottish NGOs attending:  
Nourish Scotland, Unite Scotland, Unison Scotland, Engender, Close the Gap, and the Scottish Human Rights Consortium.

[2] Nourish Scotland’s written evidence [can be accessed here](http://www.nourishscotland.org/nourish-report-to-un-cescr/).

[3] Scottish Government, Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2013/14, available [here](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/7453/0).

[4] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations to UK Government [can be accessed here](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGBR%2fCO%2f5&Lang=en).

[5] Global Nutrition Report 2016 will be [available here as of 14 June 2016](http://globalnutritionreport.org/the-report/)

Nourish Scotland is an NGO campaigning across a number of food justice issues.