



Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director

World Food Programme

Biography

Ertharin Cousin began her tenure as the twelfth Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme on 5 April 2012.

Ambassador Cousin brings more than twenty-five years of national and international non-profit, government, and corporate leadership experience focusing on hunger, food, and resilience strategies. Cousin guides the World Food Programme in meeting urgent food needs while championing longer-term solutions to food insecurity and hunger.

As the leader of the world's largest humanitarian organization with approximately 13,500 staff serving about 90 million beneficiaries in 80 countries across the world, she is an exceptional advocate for improving the lives of hungry people worldwide, and travels extensively to raise awareness of food insecurity and chronic malnutrition.

In 2009, Ertharin Cousin was nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to be the United States Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture, and head of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies in Rome.

During her nearly three years as the chief U.S. diplomatic voice for famine relief and hunger solutions, Cousin helped guide U.S. and international policy around some of the most devastating and life-threatening situations in the world. She advocated for aid strategies that integrate a transition from relief to development, including following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and for country-led sustainable agriculture programmes, particularly in the aftermath of the 2010 flooding in Pakistan and in response to the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa.



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As the U.S. Representative in Rome, she played a significant role in advocating for improved collaboration among, and promoting gender parity and mainstreaming in, the three Rome-based food and agriculture agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agriculture Development and the World Food Programme. During her tenure, she actively participated in reforming the Committee on World Food Security, enlarging the multi-stakeholder platform and helping to introduce a results-based framework. In 2011, she also assumed the presidency of the International Development Law Organization's Assembly of Parties.

Ambassador Cousin worked in the Administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton for four years, including serving as White House Liaison to the State Department, and received a White House appointment to the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

Ambassador Cousin served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Feeding America (then known as America's Second Harvest), the largest domestic hunger organization in the United States. She led the organization's response to Hurricane Katrina, an effort that resulted in the distribution of various relief supplies, including food, to those in need across the Gulf Coast region of the United States.

Ambassador Cousin has significant background in the retail food sector, leading government communications and community affairs for two large U.S. grocery chains, Albertsons Foods and Jewell Foods. While working for Albertsons, she served as President and Chair of the company's corporate foundation, managing the organization's philanthropic activities.

Ambassador Cousin is a native of Chicago and a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Georgia School of Law. She is a published author and accomplished speaker on food insecurity and chronic malnutrition. She is based in Rome, Italy.