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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 2004

In accordance with the methods of work of the Executive Board, the present document reflects the main points of its deliberations to be taken into account by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Board's decisions and recommendations, contained in document WFP/EB.1/2004/13/Rev.1.

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Adoption of the Agenda

1. The President indicated that item 12, other business, would include (i) a paper on the Executive Director's representational allowance and (ii) an oral report by the Steering Group on Governance (SG/G) on the question of the audit committee. The proposed additions were agreed and the Agenda was adopted.

Election of the Bureau of the Executive Board and Appointment of the Rapporteur

2. The President announced that after due consultation among the Lists, the following elections had been made to the Bureau: List C—Mr M. Barreto (Peru), President; List D—H.E. Poul Skytte Christoffersen (Denmark), Vice President; List B—Ms N. Akhter (Bangladesh); List A—Mr N. Rimouche (Algeria); and List E—Mr M. Paksi (Slovakia). The election of the Vice-President would take effect as soon as Denmark was elected as a Board member by ECOSOC.* The Rapporteur would be Ms Akhter, according to the normal rotation.
3. He hoped that WFP would acknowledge the work done on Board documentation by including authors' names on papers. The President reminded Board members that they were more than national representatives: they were trustees committed to helping millions of people in poverty and hunger. Part of their function was to foster commitment among WFP staff and partners; WFP was very special, and needed their leadership.
4. The Executive Director paid a warm tribute to the outgoing President, acknowledging that WFP had many strengths—to which the President had contributed in no small measure—and that there was no substitute for a committed Board of leaders who could inspire and motivate. WFP had benefited from the President's visits to the field, which had been much appreciated, and from his work on governance, which was being emulated in other United Nations bodies. He could be satisfied that he had contributed directly to the improvement of millions of lives.

CURRENT AND FUTURE STRATEGIC ISSUES (2004/EB.1/1)

5. In his presentation, the Executive Director informed the Board that in 2003 all records for WFP had been broken: 110 million people had been assisted with food aid and total contributions amounted to US\$2.6 billion, plus an additional US\$1.2 billion for Iraq. In 2004, WFP's aims were to do more and to do it better, while also forging stronger partnerships and continuing to be sensitive to the needs of those whom WFP serves.
6. The Executive Director went on to highlight major challenges to be faced in the coming year. In Iraq WFP would continue to serve the most vulnerable segments of the population, but the hope was that operations could be gradually phased out. In the Palestinian Territory, 540,000 people at risk were being fed in spite of logistical difficulties. In Afghanistan refugees were returning faster than expected and there were still considerable needs despite a good cereal harvest. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) only 25 percent of funding needs had so far been secured, but recently more contributions had been forthcoming. In Sudan, Ethiopia and Chad as well as in Liberia millions of people needed assistance. In Southern Africa bad weather had reduced crop

* Denmark was elected as a member of the Board by ECOSOC on 27 February 2004.



production, so reserves would not be available in 2004. The situation in Haiti was worrying: 347,000 people were being fed in spite of the difficulties.

7. The Millennium Development Goals would remain a major focus, in particular the goal of eradicating hunger; 25,000 people died from hunger every day and 25 percent of the world's children were underweight. WFP would continue to locate and help the poorest and most vulnerable. WFP would focus on nutrition as a main point of leverage. Malnutrition affected a third of the world's population, and had severe consequences, including child and maternal mortality as well as economic losses due to diminished productivity by those affected. WFP would also continue to explore and address the relationship between HIV/AIDS and nutrition, focusing on providing nourishment to improve resistance to infection and response to drugs. Women would be targeted as a priority to ensure that the food reached families, and efforts would be made to reduce their burdens and risks.
8. WFP would continue to strengthen cooperation and coordination with partners, including beneficiaries, recipient governments, NGOs, multilateral organizations and bilateral donors. A major challenge on the funding side in 2004 would be to broaden the donor base, and in particular to solicit the support of non-traditional donors and the private sector. In this context the Executive Director briefed the Board on a number of visits he had undertaken to Member Countries, which had yielded both opportunities for cooperation and commitments for increased contributions. He also highlighted the excellent working relationships between WFP and other United Nations partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the active participation of the organization in efforts within the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to strengthen the United Nations system wide cooperation.
9. WFP was also continuing to focus on improving corporate management, in particular through Results Based Management (RBM). All senior managers had participated in RBM training and corporate results indicators were being developed. A new training programme for country directors had been initiated and a new evaluation system was in place, strengthening the use of evaluations as a learning tool. Financial capacity in regional and country offices had been improved with the introduction of WINGS, and 50 new finance officers were being recruited. Staff security remained a concern and US\$20 million had been earmarked to improve systems and recruit personnel.
10. After the presentation by the Executive Director, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Ruud Lubbers, gave a statement in which he expressed satisfaction with the close partnership between the two organizations, focusing on the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). He reminded the meeting of the importance of appeals to donors to maintain their contributions so that refugee return and resettlement could be sustainable. The hope for 2004 was to extend school feeding to refugees and to include refugees in national programmes and gender targets. He also stressed the need to include refugee populations in host country strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS.
11. The High Commissioner also briefed the Board on two main focus areas for UNHCR: promotion of durable solutions for refugees, which included: (i) promoting development assistance for refugees (ii) the "4Rs" programme (repatriation, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction) and (iii) strategies for local integration. He also discussed the "Convention plus" initiative whereby UNHCR would encourage burden sharing and permanent solutions for refugees. Partnerships and cooperation with country teams were fundamental. Since both UNHCR and WFP were organizations with a large field presence



they were faced with many of the same challenges, which called for joint efforts. This was also why the Executive Director had been invited to attend the UNHCR Executive Committee in Geneva.

12. The Board expressed strong support for the work of the two organizations. Several members stressed the urgent need for assistance to Haiti, where a potentially catastrophic situation was developing. The need for WFP to enhance publicity and visibility world wide and be a strong advocate for addressing the problems of hunger was also reiterated. The value of multilateral contributions was highlighted, as it gave WFP the flexibility to respond to various demands. The need to broaden the donor base and encourage new donors was stressed by several members. The Board also endorsed the Secretariat's actions to promote cooperation among United Nations agencies and other partners, strengthening corporate management and enhancing staff security.
13. The Board recognized the importance of including HIV/AIDS in WFP programmes, especially in view of the growing number of people affected. Good nutrition was seen as the first line of defence. It was noted that in some cases WFP's efforts in emergency situations were not widely publicized, and WFP's efforts in these "forgotten emergencies" were commended. Several members spoke about specific needs for WFP assistance in their own countries and highlighted contributions and possibilities for cooperation.
14. The Executive Director and the High Commissioner thanked the Board for its support. The Executive Director stressed that WFP was aware of the needs identified by the Board and was working towards meeting them. WFP needed to have the overall strength to respond in any crisis, for which good management was fundamental. He reiterated the commitment of WFP to assist the people of Haiti in the current crisis. He also noted the importance of identifying and abiding by a set of humanitarian principles that defined a philosophy of mutual responsibility. Finally, he acknowledged the need to increase WFP's profile and overall visibility. Work to this end was in progress.

POLICY ISSUES

Emergency Needs Assessments (2004/EB.1/2)

15. The Secretariat introduced the paper by noting that accurate and transparent emergency needs assessments were important to WFP, as a matter of professionalism and credibility. The paper aimed to demonstrate that WFP was committed to improving its emergency needs assessments (ENAs), that it understood the issues and challenges faced in this regard and that it was working purposefully to bring about improvement.
16. The Board underscored the importance of ENAs to WFP's operations. Board members expressed appreciation for the clear and candid discussion of the measures required to strengthen existing ENA capacities, and support for the steps that were already taken or planned. Board members requested more details as to how WFP planned to implement the proposed measures, including a budget and timetable. Board members also urged WFP to clarify how it planned to collaborate with international partners to avoid duplication of efforts, whether some tasks could be contracted out to other partners, how it planned to achieve greater transparency in reporting on ENA outcomes, how WFP planned to improve market and nutrition analyses and enhance crop and food supply assessments, whether WFP could make better use of local expertise and how WFP would determine when food aid was and was not an appropriate response.



17. In response, the Secretariat drew attention to WFP's existing close collaboration with a wide range of United Nations and non-United Nations partners on emergency needs assessments, and on other issues. WFP relied on many of these partners for complementary inputs and support, but WFP was determined to ensure that at least a minimum degree of expertise was available in-house on core assessment issues, since the right partners were not always available. Such expertise was in any case needed in situations other than emergencies. The Secretariat emphasized that WFP did not have answers to all of the methodological challenges that had been outlined, but that it was working to address these issues with the support of donors and other partners. The Secretariat expressed its readiness to provide additional progress reports on efforts to improve ENAs, but urged that due consideration be given to WFP's operational needs. Transparency would be improved by a new website that had been set up to make available the outcomes of ENAs; it was intended that in-country debriefings should become the rule. The accountability of country and regional directors for emergency needs assessments was also being emphasized.
18. The Secretariat agreed to present, at the Third Session in October, an update on progress made in implementing the measures outlined in the document. This update would include a proposed implementation plan addressing cooperation with other agencies, the timetable and budget implications. The Secretariat was committed to holding a consultation with partners to obtain their input on the formulation of the implementation plan.

WFP Policy on Staff Recruitment and Geographical Representation of Member States (2004/EB.1/3)

19. The Director of the Human Resources (HR) Division presented this item, which supplied the Board with the additional information that it had requested during previous discussions of the issue at the Annual Session in May 2003. The document also included a re-worded draft decision.
20. The Director reminded the Board that WFP applied an informal formula to ensure geographical and gender balances among its international professional staff.
21. During its discussion, the Board stated its approval of WFP's merit-based recruitment policy, efforts to improve the gender balance among international staff and the policy of making managers accountable for their recruiting decisions. Various Board members expressed concern (i) about the potential bias towards favouring a few major donor countries in the current recruitment policy, (ii) regarding the difficulties of including developing countries in the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme, and (iii) about the need to ensure equitable representation of women, especially those from developing countries. Referring to the importance of reflecting the richness and diversity of WFP's membership in its geographical representation policy, one member questioned the justification of the 60–40 distribution between donors and others. Some Board members wondered where countries in transition – particularly those in Eastern and Central Europe – fitted into the geographical representation policy. The Board requested the Secretariat to keep the issue under review and to report on it in future Board meetings.
22. The Secretariat recognized that this complex issue required further discussion by the Board, especially after completion of the review of local staffing issues currently being undertaken as part of the HR Strategic Review. It agreed that the informal formula for geographical and gender representation depended on good faith and transparency. Among the issues being tackled as part of the HR Strategic Review are the conditions of service of local staff and the need to bring all WFP staff under a single employment framework using FAO rules and regulations. The results of the review of this issue and its effect on geographical representation in WFP would be presented to the Board.



23. In summing up, the President stated (i) that WFP was moving forward with this issue, (ii) that it was not possible to devise a new formula at the present stage, (iii) that there were no uniform international criteria for this issue and (iv) that the issue must be dealt with and additional information provided at future meetings.
24. The Executive Director emphasized that WFP would continue to recruit the best candidates in the world. Both he and WFP were committed to employing more women, as well as staff from developing countries and new and emerging donors. He was also encouraging donors to fund JPOs from developing countries.

Humanitarian Principles (2004/EB.1/4)

25. In initiating the discussion, the Secretariat pointed out that the paper responded to a request made at the last Session of the Executive Board for a policy statement on humanitarian principles. The document presented to the Board for approval contained the “WFP Statement on Humanitarian Principles”, which specified ten core humanitarian principles that guided WFP’s work. These principles were derived from relevant legal instruments and were consistent with the Sphere Project, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and other international efforts to standardize humanitarian principles. The Secretariat also made two technical clarifications regarding the international humanitarian law section of the paper, which responded to issues raised by one of the delegations in advance of the Board’s discussion.
26. The Board welcomed the document and recognized the great efforts that had been made to meet the Board’s request. It commended the Secretariat for producing a document that clearly reflected the international debate and discussion on the subject. Various members emphasized how important it was that WFP, as the world’s largest humanitarian organization, should clarify the principles that guide its work and ensure that its staff fully understood these principles.
27. Board Members suggested some revisions to the body of the document to incorporate reference to other important bodies of law, such as the Refugee Conventions and Human Rights Law and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and to ensure that the document was grounded firmly in the United Nations Charter. They also requested additional emphasis in paragraph 13 to the importance of effective strategies facilitating the transition from relief to longer-term development, the need to ensure that food aid «does no harm» and the possibility for other United Nations bodies, the Secretary General as well as affected nations, to request WFP to provide assistance. Several delegates proposed adding principles of independence and universality and suggested that human rights approaches should feature more prominently in the document. Members also asked the Secretariat to use its Statement on Humanitarian Principles, once approved, to give impetus to the stagnated effort in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to standardize humanitarian principles among its members.
28. In response, the Secretariat supported many of the suggestions to amend the document, particularly the need to reference relevant instruments, emphasize the relief to development linkages and clarify the language regarding those eligible to request WFP assistance in line with the General Regulations. The Secretariat questioned whether a principle on independence was appropriate for an agency that is owned by member states and suggested that it would be premature to incorporate further language regarding a rights-based approach. The Secretariat also informed the Board of some of the difficulties faced by the IASC in reaching consensus on humanitarian principles among its membership and cautioned the Board to avoid replicating that debate.



29. A number of questions were raised about implementation and whether endorsement of the principles would result in any significant change in the way WFP operated. The Secretariat expressed the view that WFP was already living in accordance with these principles and indicated that the WFP statement would serve as an important form of guidance for staff in difficult situations.
30. The Executive Director concluded the discussion by emphasizing the importance of the exercise to elaborate humanitarian principles, which help to define “who we are, why we are here and how we will do our work”. He emphasized that, when endorsed, the ten humanitarian principles would be added to the Consolidated Framework of WFP Policies, and would be made available to prospective employees and Board members as part of WFP’s orientation programme. The Statement of Humanitarian Principles would also become a part of the Programme’s code of conduct and a mechanism to ensure that everyone within WFP’s family and its partners were aware of the principles that guide WFP’s work.
31. Following a recommendation by the President, the Board endorsed the ten principles and asked the Secretariat to prepare a revised document, taking into account the comments made during debate, which will be submitted to the Board, through the Bureau, for information at the next session.

WFP Report on Follow-up to General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/201: Triennial Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (2004/EB.1/5)

32. The Director of the External Relations Division introduced this item, which the Board had requested at its First Regular Session in 2002.
33. The Board discussed the item together with document WFP/EB.1/2004/INF/6 from agenda item 12. Board members requested WFP to take as active a role as possible in the triennial policy review process, and asked for more information on WFP’s plans to prepare an advisory paper on poverty reduction strategies, and to design indicators, strengthen its role in national capacity building and halt the decline of funding for development activities.
34. The President replied that national capacity-building (strategic priority no. 5) would be dealt with at the Third Regular Session in October 2004. An informal consultation on new, emerging and private-sector donors would take place in Spring 2004.
35. The Board requested the Secretariat to continue discussion of WFP’s approach to the triennial comprehensive policy review at future sessions. WFP was preparing a poverty reduction strategy framework and guidelines, and was involved in developing indicators as part of results-based management. The Board requested copies of the calendar of the preparatory process for the triennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations operational activities.
36. The Draft Decision was reworded and approved. The Board took note of members’ request to the Secretariat to discuss follow-up to humanitarian issues and resolutions.

Update on WFP’s Response to HIV/AIDS (2004/EB.1/6)

37. In presenting the update, the Secretariat summarized the key aspects of the “Update on WFP’s Response to HIV/AIDS” circulated to the Board. It pointed out that WFP had been quick to scale up programming on HIV/AIDS, and in the process had strengthened its partnerships with United Nations agencies, non governmental organizations (NGOs) and



academic centres. It was, for instance, cooperating with WHO to include food as an essential component in WHO programmes. WFP had also developed a corporate message on the topic. The demand for operations related to HIV/AIDS was large and growing; programmes needed to be expanded, and the Board would increasingly be asked to consider requests for funding in this area.

38. Members of the Board recognized the seriousness of the issue and fully supported all WFP activities related to HIV/AIDS. They commended the Programme, in particular, on its focus on orphans and on the valuable connections it had made between nutrition and the disease.
39. One Board member noted the extremely complex relationships between poverty and HIV/AIDS and the evolving learning process that all actors were involved in. WFP was trying a number of approaches, including prevention, mitigation, school feeding and anti-retroviral treatment. He noted that the paper contained a good deal of information about initial assessments, but only mentioned monitoring for the first time in paragraph 38. It was important to assess the impact of various approaches to ensure that the best value was being made of international assistance aimed at addressing HIV/AIDS. Of particular interest would be a study on the links between food assistance and HIV prevention.
40. It was also noted that *coordination* was not mentioned in the document at all. At its last Session, the Board had specifically asked WFP to provide it with more information on its coordination with the United Nations system, particularly with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Coordination was vital, particularly to avoid duplication of efforts with other organizations.
41. Members of the Board also found that the references in paragraph 26 to “large-scale operations for facilitating voluntary counselling and testing” were not totally appropriate. It was felt that food assistance should not be used as an incentive for people to be tested and counselled.
42. The Secretariat agreed with all of these observations. It confirmed that WFP did coordinate its HIV/AIDS-related work with UNAIDS, but conceded that coordination needed to be strengthened. It stated that a future report would examine this aspect more closely.
43. The Executive Director emphasized that WFP was working collegially with UNAIDS, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WHO and relied on their research. A co-sponsor of UNAIDS, WFP was also working with local and central governments. Food and good nutrition were the most important first line of defence against HIV/AIDS. He agreed with the Board’s observation that coordination was essential in HIV/AIDS issues. The United Nations had cooperated with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Southern Africa, and WFP was doing it best to be part of that team. WFP, however, was aware of what it could do and could not, and would not stretch itself beyond its capabilities.
44. The Board took note of this information and was waiting for future information, taking into account the opinions expressed during this discussion.

Information Note on WFP’s Support for NEPAD (2004/EB.1/7)

45. The Secretariat introduced the paper by reminding the Board that it was occasioned by a request made at a previous meeting, and outlined WFP’s cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).
46. The Board took note and welcomed the Information Note, which clearly reflected WFP’s commitment to Africa, and praised its quality.



47. In recognizing the need for continued efforts to achieve long-term goals in Africa, members applauded the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NEPAD and WFP, especially its aims to promote school feeding and food-reserve systems. The need to integrate initiatives launched under NEPAD with national strategies and action plans was also noted. The pilot programme for school feeding that involved small-scale local farmers in producing and supplying food was particularly praised, because it offered a way to help the rural poor.
48. The essentially African character of NEPAD was highlighted: African nations had taken the initiative in creating a purely African partnership to take control of development and reduce dependence on outside aid and assistance. The partnership element was particularly important in achieving NEPAD's goals. Development would be the result of national efforts, but there was still a need for international support, especially from WFP. The will to achieve development goals existed, but resources were often not enough; synergy with WFP would help to make success possible. Action was essential to ensure that African countries had adequate resources to counter the impact of crises and to be prepared for crises. In some cases, the promised levels of support had regrettably not materialized. WFP should concentrate on relief food aid and work with individual states to support refugees and returnees to help their economic and social recovery. The main challenges were in the areas of health, education and food and water resources. The establishment of a US\$300 million emergency fund was warmly welcomed.
49. It was pointed out that NEPAD activities needed to be harmonized with the work of United Nations and other agencies and institutions. NEPAD had virtually no resources to implement its aims, so international support and partnership with such bodies as the African Union was pivotal. The need for technical assistance was noted in particular. WFP should link its activities with regional economic communities. It was recognized that NEPAD activities should not have the effect of expanding the work of any institution into new fields. The consistency between NEPAD's aims and the Millennium Development Goals was noted.
50. The Board expressed strong support for WFP-NEPAD collaboration, including the home-grown school feeding programme and the study of food-reserve systems in Africa, and requested the Executive Director to keep the Board posted on further developments with regard to the implementation and achievements of the MOU.

RESOURCE, FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Business Process Review: Pilot Financing Paper (2004/EB.1/8)

51. In presenting the document, the Secretariat emphasized that it had been produced to address the need for updated financial rules and regulations; WFP's policies were still appropriate, but implementation methods needed to change to reflect new realities such as the growth of WFP business—needs had outstripped emergency fund availability—and the requirements for improved reporting and responsiveness to donors. The aim was to have the new system in place by January 2005, but in view of the importance of the issue work on it would not be rushed.
52. The essential features of the proposed new system were improved utilization of contributions and improved availability of commodities as projects proceeded. In the past budgeting had to be done on a worst-case basis to allow for variations, which often resulted in unspent balances at project end; the new system would put budgeting on a multi-scenario, single cash account basis to optimize the use of funds and resolve the



problem of the timing mismatch between commodity needs and availability. More transparent reconciliation at project end was another advantage. Such a system would also improve coordination with donors' timetables. The proposed system would be tested and validated by the five pilot schemes currently under way.

53. The new system would bring about a significant improvement in the numbers of beneficiaries reached—possibly by 40 percent—as funds were used more efficiently. Unspent balances would be reduced. Savings of US\$370 million were envisaged. There was a need under the proposed new system for effective risk analysis and management capability.
54. The goal was to improve business throughput by between 10 percent and 40 percent. The Board was asked to approve a rule change authorized by the Executive Director that would permit use of the Operational Reserve to cover the risks of the pilot projects.
55. The Board recognized the importance of this topic and expressed approval of and confidence in the work done by the Secretariat and commended the quality of the document. There was full support for the proposals, and the Board asked to be kept informed of developments.
56. Some members thought that the risk element in the pilot projects was very small, given the funding reserves available; the real risks would emerge in large-scale operations that evolved rapidly. The pilots would be useful training for financial and project management staff. The need for rigorous emergency needs assessments was noted, and for intellectual leadership in a consultative, integrated approach, especially in view of potentially declining levels of contributions, which would be offset by increased efficiency. The need to align the new system with the Strategic Plan and the Management Plan was noted.
57. Clarification was sought regarding the criteria for selecting the locations of the pilot projects and as to whether there had been sufficient time to learn the lessons they produced. Some members expressed doubt as to the wisdom of operating with multiple budget lines and as to the likelihood of obtaining blanket approval from donors regarding the use of their contributions. The notion of food sales by WFP was questioned by some members. The need for clear demarcation and authority in the new financing system was highlighted; a good deal of complex work at Headquarters would be needed, and clarification of the effect of this on staffing was sought. The fact that the new system was one of several options was noted by some members. The flexibility of the proposed system and the fact that it would eliminate unspent cash in hand were commended. The need to work closely with donors was noted. The Board sought further consultation on the new system before it was implemented, especially in that changes to regulations governing donors' contributions could be required.
58. The Secretariat was grateful for the support shown by the Board, whose interventions would be taken into consideration. In response to questions, the Secretariat noted that the pilot project locations had been chosen on the basis of operational conditions, not geography. Financial management was to be strengthened by the appointment of 50 additional finance officers; WINGS had made a major contribution to WFP's efficiency. The Secretariat accepted that blanket approval for the use of contributions was unlikely, but good reporting would enhance credibility and give donors confidence. More work was needed on the question of commodity use; regional borrowing was being looked into, but there were no final answers as yet. If the timeframe of the pilot projects was too short, implementation of the new system would be delayed; it was too important to risk mistakes.
59. The Board approved the draft decision as written.



Basis for Calculation of Indirect Support Costs (ISC) on Ocean Transport Costs (2004/EB.1/9)

60. In introducing the document, the Secretariat explained that the Board was being requested to endorse the decision taken by the previous Executive Director on the treatment of cargo preference premiums from the United States. The Secretariat noted that Board ratification was being sought before the 2002–2003 biennial audited financial statements were issued in May 2004.
61. The Secretariat explained that following the introduction of resource and long-term financing (R<F) policies in 1996, all donors had to contribute cash to cover the associated costs, including indirect support costs (ISC), of their contributions. The Secretariat explained the legislative requirements of the United States Government on the transport of commodities donated by the United States. From 1996 to 2001 the United States paid ISC on all their contributions, including the cargo preference premium. In 2001, the United States informed WFP that the cargo preference premium required to be paid to United States shippers under United States legislation should not be subject to ISC.
62. In agreeing to the United States position, the then Executive Director had decided that the cargo preference premium would not be considered part of the United States contribution and would be accounted for through a pass-through mechanism in WFP's books. The WFP External Auditors subsequently questioned the accounting treatment of the cargo preference premiums, which they considered should be recorded as income and expenditures.
63. The Secretariat informed the Board that the document had been considered by the FAO Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), which requested that the accounting treatment be disclosed in the Biennial Financial Statements.
64. The Board thanked the Secretariat for the paper and background provided but felt that this particular case needed to be placed in a broader perspective with consideration of its full implications. The issue of donor restrictions was a generic problem, and such limitations affected WFP's efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility. The Board suggested that the cargo preference issue should be dealt with in a broader discussion of donor limitations, the untying of food aid and transport, and multilateralism.
65. The Board recognized the legislative constraints of the donor and the need for flexibility by the Secretariat and agreed that WFP should avoid exceptions and the differential treatment of donors. Views were expressed on: (i) the possible consequences of a retroactive decision, (ii) the need to avoid of setting precedents for exceptions, (iii) the technical nature of the subject, which should not be mixed with other issues, and (iv) the costs of administering the accounting arrangement.
66. Board members asked the Secretariat to provide them with the opinion of the External Auditor and legal advisers. They also proposed that discussions should take place on the broader issues of the treatment of contributions to WFP.
67. Following additional information provided by the Secretariat on this, the Board approved the following revised decision:

“Further to the recommendation of the External Auditor, the Board approved, on an exceptional basis, the exceptional measure adopted by the Executive Director to exclude the cargo preference premiums for ocean transport from the United States contributions, consistent with the agreement reached on 30 October 2001 between the United States Government and WFP, as described in document



WFP/EB.1/2004/5-B/1. This approval is limited to the biennium ending 31 December 2003, and does not constitute a precedent for WFP's future treatment of donor contributions.

The Board stressed that this decision should not prejudice the outcome of any future discussion on the subject. In this regard, it invited the Secretariat to hold an informal consultation on the treatment of contributions.

The Board took note of the comments of the ACABQ (WFP/EB.1/2004/5(A,B)/2) and the FAO Finance Committee (WFP/EB.1/2004/5(A,B)/3)".

EVALUATION REPORTS

Summary Report of the Thematic Evaluation of the PRRO Category (2004/EB.1/10)

68. Introducing the document, the Director of OEDE stressed that the nature of WFP assistance had changed in the last 15 years, with emergency interventions overshadowing development work. The protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) category had emerged to deal with the new needs. The evaluation and the recommendations were a response to the Board's October 2000 request for an evaluation of the category based on its innovative and complex nature. The evaluation and associated consultations had taken a good deal of time.
69. Board members noted that the critical period after a disaster required careful management so as to avoid subsequent massive food requirements; the PRRO was vital in this respect. It was recognized that PRROs had an important place in WFP's work, particularly in helping beneficiaries to help themselves. WFP had long experience in emergency and recovery and was innovative in its approaches as, for example, with the PRRO. However, there was scope for greater efficiency, as indicated in the thematic evaluation. The need to establish accurate, achievable recovery objectives and to have adequate resources in field offices was emphasized by several members. The importance of ensuring that donors understood the objectives of PRROs was noted and, in this regard, improved contacts with governments and agencies were essential. The Board agreed that there were no simple solutions to problems addressed by PRROs, although they had had positive effects in strengthening relief-to-recovery transitions. Strong support was given to local purchasing of food for PRRO interventions, especially from developing countries. The need for follow-up on this issue was highlighted.
70. The Board welcomed the evaluation as valuable, and comprehensive and one which addressed a number of critical issues related to PRROs. Board members on the whole supported the recommendations contained in the evaluation but made some caveats and raised several questions. One delegation expressed concern that the tone of the evaluation summary was insufficiently outspoken on certain important points; questions were also raised regarding the heavy reliance on first-generation PRROs and the fact that the issue of FAO/WFP partnerships had not been directly addressed.
71. Based on some of the evaluation's findings, concerns were expressed by individual members regarding the appropriateness of the two-year conversion rule for PRROs and the evaluation finding that recovery operations may at times compromise WFP's relief work. One member inferred from the evaluation that the creation of PRROs was intended to reverse the decline in development resources. More generally, many delegations expressed disappointment with the interim management response provided by the Secretariat as an annex, and asked why WFP management did not provide a complete response to all the



recommendations. Concern was expressed that management did not seem entirely convinced by some of the findings and conclusions. Many delegations suggested that, given the importance of the evaluation's findings and recommendations, consideration be given to adopting a consultative process involving a dialogue with Board members on evaluation follow-up issues and improving the effectiveness of PRROs.

72. The Director of Evaluation thanked Board members for their careful reading of the document. The various weaknesses of the PRRO category's performance highlighted in the debate had perhaps overshadowed the strengths of the category. It was stressed that the evaluation had also found positive outcomes for PRRO interventions. The main conclusion of the evaluation, which indicated weaknesses in programming capacity, had emerged from many other OEDE-managed evaluations. The evaluation had been of an interim nature, and its information base was multi-source. This approach helped to develop stronger and more coherent conclusions. The Director of OEDE made it clear that the evaluation had not indicated that PRROs had been intended to increase income to the organization as a result of declining development resources; rather, it had been intended to create new recovery funds, which would not have been made available to WFP without PRROs. He also made it clear that the full report contained recommendations that the corporate reward structure for recovery work should be improved.
73. The Secretariat stated that the evaluation was a testimony to the independence of the Office of Evaluation and that the various issues raised in the evaluation, including issues of programme quality, would be given full consideration. The interim management response had been delayed by late receipt of the evaluation summary report. A full management response matrix would be provided for the next Board session, and would be discussed at an informal consultation.
74. Two positive findings of the evaluation mentioned in the Executive Summary had not received much attention in the preceding debate:
 - a) PRROs are "supporting core relief functions effectively"; and
 - b) "in politically stable settings, recovery activity targets are close to being met".
75. These two findings were significant given that the majority of PRROs were implemented in difficult conditions. Large PRROs for complex humanitarian emergencies had a large capital "R" for relief, and a much smaller "r" for recovery. However, WFP was right to advocate strongly for rebuilding the livelihoods of people affected by crises. Setbacks and failures were frequent and unavoidable. The recent Report of the UNDG/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) Working Group on Transition Issues pointed out that 40 percent of countries emerging from conflict slide back into conflict; in Africa, the figure was 60 percent. WFP rightly supported people's efforts to rebuild livelihoods destroyed by crises, even if recovery was not guaranteed.
76. Regarding local purchasing, WFP constantly pursued this option whenever it was feasible; substantial local and regional purchase had been made.
77. The point raised by one member about the need to review the criteria for conversion of EMOPs to PRROs after two years was accepted.
78. The thematic evaluation was based largely on a retrospective review of PRRO evaluations that had taken place between 1999 and early 2002. Things had improved considerably since then. A review of the significant improvements in each of the second-generation PRROs, taking into account the individual evaluation findings, were outside the scope of this thematic evaluation, and were therefore not reflected in the report. All second generation PRROs had logical frameworks, and in many cases log-frame training had been conducted. Vulnerability assessment and targeting had been improved,



monitoring and evaluation (M&E) had been strengthened. All the country level recommendations had in fact been implemented, with management responses provided to the Board in each case.

79. The Secretariat stated that all the issues raised in the thematic evaluation of the category would be fully reviewed and followed up; it retained full confidence in the PRRO category as a whole, based upon the fact that prominence had been given to PRROs in the WFP Biennial Management Plan. WFP would, in particular, pursue the partnership issues through the UNDG/ECHA Working Group.
80. In some cases, there had been no attempt at recovery operations, partly because of funding cuts—a problem of partially resourced PRROs. There was no sequential transition to recovery: it was a complex process involving numerous setbacks, which were not necessarily the result of poor programming. Transitions to PRROs based on a fixed time period should not be invariable, but instead should depend on the extent of relief required. The Secretariat recognized the need to strengthen capacities and partnerships. A management matrix response would be given at the May Board session, but the issues required time for adequate discussion and consultation.

REPORTS ON OPERATIONS — OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Information Note on the Special Operations Programme Category (2004/EB.1/11)

81. OTP had informed the Board at the October 2002 session that a paper on special operations (SOs) would be presented to it. OTP noted that it had been agreed for some time that the official definition of SOs no longer covered current practice or the inter-agency/common services that WFP had been increasingly called upon to provide. Discussions had commenced internally regarding the possibilities of using SOs as a funding mechanism for Strategic Priority 5. Other options, including budgeting for such projects under EMOPs/PRROs/country programmes or establishing trust funds, were also being explored.
82. The Board underscored the importance of two issues raised in paragraph 19: (i) involving donors to a greater extent in the planning stages of an SO and (ii) the need for clear performance indicators at the outset as a base for monitoring, budget adjustments or revisions. It also noted WFP's High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) mandate to administer non-peacekeeping air transport services for United Nations bodies and their NGO partners. Dissemination of information regarding WFP's role in such operations was requested.
83. Some Board members expressed concern that WFP was considering using SOs as the funding mechanism for technical assistance activities under strategic priority 5, and requested a further consultation with interested donors if WFP decided to proceed in this way. The Board also noted that the distinction between an SO, an EMOP and a PRRO could be further clarified to avoid SOs such as the one in North Korea.
84. It was agreed that OTP would submit a policy paper on SOs to the Board in May 2004.



MIDDLE EAST, CENTRAL ASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL PORTFOLIO—OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval— Armenia 10053.1 (2004/EB.1/12)

85. After providing a brief report on WFP operations in his region, the Regional Director for the Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe Region presented this item.
86. The Board expressed its support for the PRRO, but raised some questions and concerns regarding (i) the selection of project areas, (ii) the appropriateness of targeting women and girls for food for work (FFW), food-for-training (FFT) and school feeding activities (iii) the issue of collaborating with other international bodies and NGOs for this PRRO, (iv) fears that the PRRO did not pay sufficient attention to refugees and their needs and (v) greater clarification regarding the exit strategy. There were also questions concerning other WFP operations in the region.
87. In their answers, the Regional Director and the Country Director for Armenia clarified that some 25 percent of the beneficiaries of PRRO Armenia 10053.1 were refugees, and a generally high level of education meant that local people had the necessary expertise to ensure that FFW infrastructure interventions could be effective and sustainable. A number of national and international NGOs were mentioned as active WFP partners. Geographical targeting had been carried out on the basis of the highest poverty and malnutrition indicators. With regard to the exit strategy, it was explained that it would depend on the success rate of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) measures, and would be subject to end-term evaluation of the PRRO.
88. The representative for Armenia expressed his delegations concern regarding substitution of the word “blockade” by “restrictions” in this document. Armenia’s borders with neighbouring countries were closed, and the socio-economic effects of this went beyond the effects of economic restrictions. The representative for Turkey stated that his delegation had requested the word substitution because, according to figures from the Armenian statistical agency, Turkey was a trade partner of Armenia. The Secretariat responded that this situation was indeed more accurately described as “restrictions” the term “blockade” implied that no international trade was carried out at all. Hence the decision to issue a corrigendum to this document.
89. The Board approved the draft decision.

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO—OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Development Projects for Executive Board Approval—Benin 10308.0 (2004/EB.1/14) and The Gambia 10311.0 (2004/EB.1/15)

90. The Regional Director provided the Board with an overview of the situation in the Western Africa region, highlighting emergency operations in Chad and the Sahel and recent developments in the West Africa Coastal PRRO. He also presented two development projects to the Board for approval: “Promotion of Formal and Non-formal Education of Children and Youth” in Benin and “Support to Basic Education in Rural Vulnerable Regions” in The Gambia.



91. With regard to **Benin**, the Board noted that the project was in line with the country's PRSP in that it addressed root causes of poverty: food insecurity, deficiencies in the schools system and the disparity of education between boys and girls. The Board was encouraged to see that WFP assistance complemented the government's commitment to basic education. The Board commended the strategy being used to ensure the participation of stakeholders at all levels of project implementation. The main issues raised in relation to the project concerned (i) selection of the project site, (ii) the caloric value of the ration foreseen for boarding facilities, (iii) the purpose of the quarterly distributions of grain to girls in addition to the ration they received at school, (iv) the higher number of boys than girls among beneficiaries, (v) the considerable direct support costs budgeted to a United Nations organization, (vi) local purchase of food and (vii) the project's exit strategy.
92. The Secretariat advised with regard to point (i) that WFP had decided, in collaboration with the Government, to target areas that were affected by food insecurity and characterized by low primary school attendance rates. Only one region of the country, the northern region, had been selected in order to facilitate management. Concerning point (ii), 90 percent of daily caloric needs would be provided to boarders, because their families were expected to make a 10 percent contribution; this was a tested and effective method of promoting community participation in the project. The additional ration of grain (point iii) compensated families for the opportunity cost of keeping their older girl children in school and helped to prevent dropouts. The prevalence of boys over girls (point iv) reflected the situation at the start of the project; the aim was to reach parity. Regarding point (v), WFP currently contracted many administrative services to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); this cost item would go down when WINGS was implemented in the country office. While agreeing that local food products would be better suited to the customs and requirements of the targeted population (point vi), the Secretariat emphasized the considerable difficulties faced in purchasing, transporting and storing local products, especially fish. No local fishermen had reached the critical mass and degree of professionalism required to supply the project. Cotton oil might be purchased locally, once its quality had been approved and standardized. The project had an exit strategy (point vii). The Government had its own school canteen programme, and communities were likely to increase their contributions to this programme as they saw its benefits.
93. With regard to **The Gambia**, the Secretariat advised that The Gambia was among nine Sahel countries that had participated in a conference organized by the West Africa Bureau in September 2003. This project confirmed The Gambia's commitment to the ministerial declaration that had been adopted on the "Alliance for Action on School Feeding, Health and Basic Education for the Sahel 2003–2015". The project had an adult literacy component that would target women farmers. Education was the best opportunity that a government could provide to help its people out of the poverty cycle; school feeding had proved to be the best return possible on development aid.
94. The Board noted that the formation of human capital was fundamental to the country's development and approved the combination of literacy and food aid components. It reiterated the importance of the local purchase of food, which would boost the local economy and ensure that people ate the food they were accustomed to.
95. The Secretariat assured the Board that the project would strongly promote local purchases of food; possibilities included iodized salt, rice and beans. It would also encourage the Government to facilitate the formation of farmers' cooperatives to enable them to supply larger quantities of food. It pointed out that women farmers were overworked; the project hoped to provide adequate incentives for the time they lose, thus enabling them to complete the literacy programme. With regard to comments on the need



for wide-ranging partnerships, the Secretariat advised that the project **would** continue to collaborate and strengthen linkages with the private sector (TPG), United Nations agencies—FAO, UNICEF and WHO—the African Development Bank and the World Bank. Efforts would be made to encourage greater community participation in the school feeding programme.

96. The Board approved both projects.

ASIA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO—OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations for Executive Board Approval— Nepal 10058.3 (2004/EB.1/16), Cambodia 10305.0 (2004/EB.1/17) and Indonesia 10069.1 (2004/EB.1/18)

97. After highlighting aspects of WFP operations in his region, the Director of the Asia Region presented the three PRROs under this item.
98. The Board expressed its general approval for the PRROs and their appreciation of WFP's work in the three countries concerned.
99. Regarding the **Cambodia PRRO**, Board members raised concerns related to (i) the lack of information on how WFP's interventions were linked to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, (ii) the potential for closer partnership with the host country, (iii) the use of non-food interventions such as cash for work rather than FFW, (iv) WFP's possible underestimation of the political instability in Cambodia and (v) the local procurement issue.
100. Regarding the **Nepal PRRO**, the Board asked for clarification of (i) the implication of UNHCR's reduced presence in the refugee camps, (ii) how many people in the camps were needy, (iii) the timescale for repatriation/integration of refugees and (iv) what WFP was doing to prevent further incidences of sexual and gender-based violence.
101. Regarding the **Indonesia PRRO**, Board members strongly supported the PRRO and commented that (i) the PRRO approach should not be supply driven, (ii) the phase-out strategy was unclear, (iii) the Food Insecurity Atlas was appreciated, (iv) WFP was a capable organization and its continued presence in Indonesia was warranted and (v) the PRRO's trust funds needed to be utilized according to the thrust of the new PRRO.
102. The **Nepal Country Director** replied that the repatriation issue was currently at a standstill, but the United Nations was looking for alternative approaches, including discussions with the Government of Nepal on integration into the local population. A number of measures had been taken to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence; increased staff presence at the camps would help to reduce the problem, and WFP was hoping that the Government would reinstate police at the camps. All the refugees were dependent on WFP food aid, because they had no right to work in Nepal.
103. The **Cambodia Country Director** responded that (i) technical working groups were coordinated to help prioritize activities outlined in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, (ii) in line with the WFP/NGOs/Government tripartite agreements, some responsibilities were passed on to the Government—for example the Ministry of Health transported some food for tuberculosis patients, (iii) beneficiaries and the Government supported the continued use of FFW, (iv) at the time of writing it had been expected that the Government would be formed soon after the July 2003 elections and (iv) under the



current PRRO, some 20 percent of purchases were locally made; the same was true for the new PRRO.

104. The **Indonesia Country Director** responded that (i) the PRRO was in fact very needs driven, (ii) the phase-out strategy was clearly indicated in the document, (iii) the food industry that produced fortified biscuits and noodles had social commitments and (iv) the country office looked forward to implementation of the Business Process Review (BPR) pilot programme.
105. The Board approved the three PRROs.

EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO—OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations for Executive Board Approval—Sudan 10122.1 (2004/EB.1/20) and Republic of the Congo 10312.0 (2004/EB.1/21)

106. Following presentations made by the Regional Director for Central and Eastern Africa and the country directors for the Congo and the Sudan, the Board considered the PRROs being presented for these two countries.
107. Concerning the **Congo PRRO**, the Board took note that the breach of peace in the Pool region in March 2002 had precipitated a large movement of IDPs into neighbouring regions, a problem the PRRO would address. One Board member cautioned that the Pool area remained unstable and was listed as a United Nations phase 4 security area. The Secretariat assured the Board that even though the Government was committed to playing an active role in the project to improve logistics and accessibility and to guarantee staff security, WFP staff would be deployed after United Nations security clearances had been received.
108. The PRRO would support the Government in its efforts to return to normality. Board members commended the PRRO's sensitivity and attention to women, the main victims of recent conflicts. The principal comments raised in relation to the PRRO concerned (i) the involvement of local government, (ii) the possibility of stimulating local food production through local purchases or, alternatively, purchasing in the region (iii) the links between relief and rehabilitation and longer-term development and (iv) M&E.
109. The Secretariat thanked the Board for its comments, which it would take into consideration.
110. With regard to the **Sudan PRRO**, the Board recognized the vulnerability of the Eritrean refugees in that country, the majority of whom were women. The PRRO activities—food for work, food for training and food for environmental rehabilitation—would help to improve their health and nutritional status, and also assist in preventing HIV/AIDS, which affected the refugee population disproportionately. Security was a major issue. One Board member commented that environmental activities should be sustainable and that too little emphasis had been placed on recovery as opposed to relief. The Board was encouraged that cereal availability was high and prices were good, thanks to the good harvest at the end of 2003; local purchases were therefore recommended. The situation in Eritrea should be monitored; WFP should be prepared for an eventual return of refugees.



111. The Secretariat stated that it would look at the balance between environmental and recovery activities and consider redressing the situation. It also explained that transport costs were high because the only access to the area was by railway, which passed through areas controlled by militia.
112. The Board approved both PRROs.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Information Note on WFP's Security Upgrade Programme (2004/EB.1/26)

113. The Secretariat presented this short update on the US\$20 million security update programme.
114. The Director of the Management Services Division reported that good progress had been made to date and that US\$6 million had already been spent. There had been slight overspending for two of the programme's six key areas, but savings had been made in others. At this time, it seemed probable that the US\$20 million budget would be adequate for the security update programme, but the Secretariat would update the Board on this at the Annual Session in May.

OTHER BUSINESS

115. The President informed the Board that it should consider ways to improve and expedite the Board's decision-making process. Some governments had suggested that lists should indicate in advance their reactions to the documents under consideration and their positions on the issues concerned. With adequate lead time, the Secretariat and Bureau could identify the most sensitive items and prepare the required consultations and draft decisions in advance.
116. Some countries had also voiced concern about the late receipt of documents. The Secretariat apologized for these delays, which were often caused by the need to obtain updated information and to share document contents with stakeholders. One Board member suggested that WFP might consider adopting an automatic system to alert Board members when a new document was posted on the corporate home page. The Secretariat pledged to look into this possibility.
117. Following a report on staff movements, the Executive Director informed the Board that WFP would continue to work towards creating a legal office. He considered this a necessary step given the magnitude of the legal issues connected with WFP's work.
118. The Executive Director was very pleased to announce that WFP had now arranged to have universal health and medical coverage extended to its national staff all over the world. He considered this a major step forward and a tangible way to recognize the important work of this category.

Provisional Report on the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP (2004/EB.1/28)

119. The Representative of the United Kingdom presented this, explaining the reasons why it was provisional. He highlighted the invitation in the section on Simplification and Harmonization to the Executive Heads to submit a paper on the value-added of the



Joint Meeting in March 2004, which would be the subject of informal consultation thereafter among Board members.

120. Among suggested ways of improving joint meetings was the promotion of joint field visits. Informal documents from the Joint Meeting were made available to Board members.

Oral Report on the Issue of the Audit Committee

121. The President presented this item. After consultations between the Bureau's Steering Group on Governance and the Secretariat, it was agreed that there were no arguments to set up a new piece of audit machinery for WFP in addition to the existing External Auditor appointed by the Board, the Internal Audit Committee, ACABQ and the FAO Finance Committee.
122. It was further agreed that the main issue was to strengthen the existing Internal Audit Committee and that this view was in line with that of the Executive Director and the External Auditor.
123. The Bureau asked the Executive Director to develop a proposal to strengthen the internal oversight function and to present this paper to the Board for information at a future Board meeting.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ARV	anti-retroviral
BPR	Business Process Review
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
EMOP	emergency operation
ENA	emergency needs assessments
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
HLCM	High Level Committee on Management
HR	Human Resources
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	internally displaced people
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ISC	indirect support costs
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organization
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results-Based Management
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SO	special operation
TB	Tuberculosis
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

