

Executive Board –February 2014
OMC Regional Director Statement

Introduction

- Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,
- Before I provide you with an update on the region, I wish to extend a warm welcome to H.E. Mr. Mohammed Saeed al-Sa’adi, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) from the Republic of Yemen, he has joined us today in support of the new PRRO that will be presented later to the board for approval.
- You will later hear from the Country Director the update on the country and the details regarding the new operation in **Yemen**. WFP’s commitment to supporting the Yemeni people; last year WFP reached some 5 million, this year WFP plans to reach more beneficiaries
- Yemen has moved further in its political transition, with the recent successful completion of the GCC-led National Dialogue Process. Meanwhile, an enormous humanitarian challenge still persists. WFP estimates that still some 10 million people are food insecure, along with one of the highest level of malnutrition and other development challenges facing the country.
- For the political process and peace and stability to succeed, Yemen will need continued humanitarian support. It is around this backdrop; that the new WFP PRRO is planned and proposed for your approval.

Regional Outlook

- In general, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to face extraordinary challenges. Civil and political unrest have deepened the economic crisis. Annual food price inflation increased, compounded by static incomes and un-employment, making it even more difficult for the most vulnerable. Given that the region is a net-importer of food, exposure to price fluctuations and dependence on unsustainable sources of foreign reserves represent an additional major risk to food security.
- Ongoing discussions on the reform of subsidies in some countries while aiming at enhancing efficiency may also have an immediate short-term impact on the ability of vulnerable households to meet their basic needs.
- In addition, increasing conflict and widespread insecurity present a major threat to the region, resulting in dramatic humanitarian and refugee crisis, and taxing the already stretched economies of host countries.
- Thus in some OMC countries, WFP continues to deliver in an often extremely challenging environment with increasing security risks including recent series of kidnapping incidences of diplomatic personal, such as in Yemen, so far WFP has been fortunate.
- The outlook for countries in Central Asia is more stable. In the Kyrgyz Republic for example, positive growth in domestic crop production, increased remittances, and stabilization in food prices contributed to better food security in the country.¹ Similar trends prevail in Armenia and Tajikistan,

¹ WFP's Household Food Security Assessment (HFSA) in September 2013 revealed 14 percent of households were food insecure, compared with 24 percent in March 2013, and 25 percent in September 2012. However, while retail wheat flour prices decreased 15 percent year on year in December 2013, they remained 28 percent above that recorded in May/June 2012.

although Tajikistan remains the poorest country in the CIS and still faces serious food security and nutrition issues.

- Within this context, WFP is planning to reach 12.7 million beneficiaries in the OMC region in 2014; in addition, 4.25 million beneficiaries affected by the Syria crisis will be supported.
- WFP OMC remains focused on the scaling up of humanitarian response, strengthening emergency preparedness, fostering resilience and enhancing safety nets and social protection systems at the regional and national level.

Humanitarian Response/Resilience Building

- In terms of humanitarian response, our attention was drawn to a new emergency in **Iraq**. As a result of the armed conflict in Anbar province, there is an estimated 34,700 families displaced from Ramadi, Fallujah and surrounding areas. Al Anbar Governorate has been classified as code 'Black' which is the highest insecurity level.
- As part of the integrated mission, WFP monitors the situation and regularly participates in inter-agency emergency preparedness and response measures. A joint inter-agency assessment is underway through partner agencies as UN staff are not permitted access to Anbar governorate.
- Some of the main challenges faced on the ground are: lack of access, inadequate information leading to limited understanding of the situation in the affected areas, IDP multiple displacement and shortage in transportation providers.

- WFP RB has taken quick actions to deploy a team of people in support of the Country office in Iraq to respond to this emergency.
 - WFP has launched an Immediate Response Emergency Operation (IREMOP) to respond to the emerging needs of approximately 10,000 displaced families with food parcels for a period of one month. To date, some 4,000 families² have been reached through WFP's Cooperating Partner IOM.
 - Additionally, a CERF proposal for \$5,000,000 has been submitted with NFI/Shelter, Food, Health, and WASH sectors being prioritized as the most lifesaving and time critical. The CERF funding will meet only a limited number of the humanitarian needs and only for the first two months. Additional resources are urgently required. A request for assistance has been made by the Government of Iraq (Ministry of Displacement) to the UN and a Response Plan (formerly known as Flash Appeal) is also being developed which will allow to expand coverage to increasing numbers of affected people.
 - WFP continues to provide humanitarian and relief assistance across the region, mainly to Syria and impacted countries in the sub-region, Sudan, Palestine and of course as mentioned earlier, Yemen. While meeting immediate needs, we are constantly adapting our approaches to ensure that WFP is addressing immediate as well as medium/long term challenges.
- It is clear that the humanitarian situation in **Syria** is worsening; with 9.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 46 percent of whom

² five per household

are children. Of those, some 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced. An additional 2.4 million people having fled Syria to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Families are repeatedly forced to flee from their homes, in some cases up to as many as 10 times without sufficient food and nutrition people are forced to continue to move. Resulting in negative coping strategies.

- In 2013 WFP gradually scaled-up its targeted beneficiaries from 1.5 million in January to almost 4 million in December 2013. Since April last year, WFP started providing fortified wheat flour to 70 percent of the caseload. WFP provided specialized nutrition support to prevent malnutrition to almost 80,000 children.
- Over 1000 trucks are on the road each month, moving relief items and stored by WFP led Logistics Cluster on behalf of 16 humanitarian organizations.
- With the humanitarian situation expected to worsen, WFP is scaling up its operations to reach 4.25 million people in 2014.
- I wish to take a second to express the appreciation to the 175 national and international staff in the country who work in volatile security situations. WFP is constantly engaging in contingency planning and monitoring of risks to ensure the safety of our staff.
- At the regional level, WFP reached almost **1.5 million people** in 2013, **78 percent** of whom were **women** and **children**. Over **90 percent** of beneficiaries **received vouchers**, making this WFP's largest voucher

- programme in the world. In 2014, WFP plans to double its reach to almost 3 million people in the sub-region.
- In **Sudan**, WFP managed to reach 3.7 million beneficiaries in 2013. Despite several challenges including increased insecurity & regional unrest, funding shortfalls, access to rebel-held areas and logistical complexity, WFP managed to support 500,000 newly displaced people in Sudan last year due to its operational flexibility, extensive field presence and effective partnerships.
 - In 2014, WFP aims to support 4 million beneficiaries in Sudan. Due to increased insecurity in 2013, WFP will assist 2.4 million beneficiaries in 2014 through GFD.
 - As planned, WFP will focus on building the foundations for transitioning and reducing emergency assistance through early recovery and durable solutions, and plans to assist 1.1 million people through activities such as Farmers to Markets, Food for Asset and Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy (SAFE) projects.
 - Last year, thanks to generous donor contributions, WFP reached all of the planned food insecure people in **Gaza**, as well as an additional number of people that were assisted in response to the winter storm in December 2013, reaching a total of 290,000 beneficiaries. In the West Bank, WFP was able to deliver full food rations up until October 2013 to 340,000 people.

- WFP has also rapidly scaled up the conditional voucher programme in Palestine, which provided electronic food vouchers in exchange for activities related to agricultural improvements. In addition, rural women received training in small scale businesses. A total of 10,500 beneficiaries were supported through the conditional vouchers Programme in 2013. Unfortunately the programmes in Palestine are facing funding shortfalls and this project has been paused in 2014.

Support to Safety nets/Subsidy Systems (including School Feeding)

- Moving on to another regional priority in 2014, OMC is working on enhancing support to national safety nets and subsidy systems. Currently, the RB is working on the augmentation of regional and country office capacities in this area in order to provide better technical assistance to the Governments. WFP is exploring at the regional level partnering with other institutions including IFPRI and the World Bank to conduct a region-wide assessment of safety nets to better inform policy and programme design.
 - In addition to supporting 2.8 million beneficiaries in 12³ Countries through WFP **school feeding programmes** in the region, WFP is providing technical support towards developing a sustainable strategy of the national school-feeding programme in several countries. In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, WFP's school feeding programme

³ OMC had school feeding programmes in 13 countries in 2013; now only 12 countries after excluding Iraq since they did not have planning figures for 2014.

is being scaled-up. WFP has supported the design of a school feeding policy document which is now being reviewed by the Government and is expected to be approved shortly.

- WFP is also providing support to several Governments in the region with the objective of enhancing national subsidy systems. In **Egypt**, WFP has worked on a series of studies analyzing and making recommendations to strengthen the efficiency, targeting and savings of the government's food subsidy system, which urgently needs reform. WFP continues to support the Government of Egypt to improve the food-subsidy system through fortification of the wheat flour and cooking oil for Egypt's 67 million ration card holders.
- In **Jordan**, WFP contributed to the finalization of the National Resilience Plan (NRP) and reflected all interventions planned for the coming two years. The National Resilience Plan has shaped the needs of host communities and responded to Government's request to provide support to host communities and Jordanians in General.
- Under the Social Safety Net (SSN) Capacity Development activity, WFP **Iraq** has been supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) by providing training to Government staff and through conducting a Financial and Managerial Planning workshop with the objective of developing a road map on how to better use and manage social safety net resources.

Support to local economies

- When possible, WFP supports local economies. Overall in 2013, WFP injected US\$ 475 million in countries across the region. For example, in countries like **Jordan** and **Lebanon** country for local procurement through the voucher programme. This has lessened the country's burden of hosting the Syrian refugees.

Conclusions

- In conclusion, I wish to highlight the importance of ensuring that our operations are well funded. At a regional level, our operations are facing a shortfall of US\$ 406 million, representing 56 percent of the regional needs. Additional support is immediately needed to address the gaps in Iraq Anbar emergency response, Syria, Sudan, Palestine and the Kyrgyz republic.
- Thank you for your support!