

**OMJ Introductory Statement**  
**First Regular Session of the Executive Board**  
**18-19 February 2013**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Recalling the Executive Board sessions last year, I informed you that the southern Africa region was reeling under the yoke of a triple threat: of extraordinarily high rates of HIV/AIDS, high stunting rates and exposure to weather-related shocks. This year is no exception. The region is experiencing floods, droughts and cyclones. WFP is working in tandem with Government and other partners to develop appropriate food response programmes to these problems, with the cornerstone objective to build resilience.
  
- ***Drought: The 2011/2012 rainfall season was not favourable to crop production in southern Africa*** due to the late onset of rains and prolonged dry spells over many parts of the region. In some areas, this is the third consecutive year of drought. To respond to the most urgent lean season requirements (November to April), WFP rapidly scaled up food assistance programmes to assist 3.8 M of the 4.3 M most vulnerable people in Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

- Happy to report that both host and traditional government partners were quick to step forward, and thus food assistance programmes, including cash and voucher assistance, are reaching needy people. To note, governments have contributed generously to the response: the Government of Malawi donated 25,000 MT of maize from the Strategic Grain Reserve for the relief operation as an initial response targeting the most affected areas, and a second significant donation of 47,600 MT, with several donors providing the funds to covered transport and distribution costs. Likewise, the Government of Zimbabwe quickly responded to the situation, allocating 35,000 MT of grain from its reserve, and jointly implementing the Seasonal Targeted Assistance programme.
- WFP has also received a recent contribution of **USD 20 million by the Republic of South Africa**, in response to the food security challenges women and children are facing **in Lesotho** following the impact of drought and late rains in the 2011-2012 cropping season. Cereal production is at its lowest in 10 years. This contribution through WFP confirms the increasingly important role that the Republic of South Africa is playing in humanitarian response, and it places it amongst WFP's top donors in 2013.

- **Floods:** In addition to drought, **Southern Africa is also prone to recurring floods**, often in the same districts and during the same season. In the past two months, above normal rainfall has negatively affected the 2012/2013 agricultural season in many countries.
- Since October 2012, **floods in Mozambique** have killed a total of 105 people, and major flooding that began the second half of January 2013 saw 150,000 people displaced in the south. WFP as the lead for the logistics cluster, has launched a Special Operation to cater for the logistics and emergency telecommunications response to flooding in the southern part of Gaza province, including air transport by helicopter, coordination of logistics assets, collection and dissemination of logistics information as well as coordination and provision of emergency telecommunications support. New floods in the last few days in the central and northern regions have temporarily displaced an additional 50,000 people. WFP is currently providing assistance under its PRRO, to ensure a rapid and effective response to emergency needs and to support early recovery, while building national emergency preparedness and response.
- In **Madagascar, storms and rains caused by Tropical Cyclone Felleng** affected 5,000 people, and displaced over 1,300 – much less damage than what was greatly feared had Felleng struck, as projected, the eastern

coast. More heavy rain has fallen recently, especially across southern Madagascar, and cyclones will pose a further risk to the country in the coming two months. We are concerned that constrained resources only allowed half of the needed 1,000 MT of food to be prepositioned.

Madagascar is also again threatened by a major locust swarm that could infest most of the island, like in November 2012, when the government declared a state of emergency across the country.

- **Floods** have so far displaced over 33,000 people **in southern Malawi**, and have left many without shelter in **Zimbabwe**, countries where **WFP is assisting 2,9 M and 1.5M people respectively**. Flooding has also been reported in Botswana, Namibia as well as the Seychelles, who declared a state of emergency on 28 January and appealed for international aid through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN RC's Office.
- We are only at the beginning of the peak of the flood and cyclone season, which stretches from January to April, so **further rains could affect the water levels, in particular the rivers of Limpopo and Zambeze**, increasing the risk of floods and people displacement. Even though national disaster management agencies have improved their systems throughout the region, if there was to be a significant increase in the number of people affected, greater support from the international humanitarian community

would be needed, as government resources are limited and levels of relief stocks low.

- Prioritising programmes with activities that build the resilience of communities to shocks is becoming an integral part of our response. We are approaching the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for them to take the lead so that member states also make it a priority response mechanism to recurrent emergencies.
- Another event that we are closely monitoring is the **recent outbreak of African armyworm** in several countries (including Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This could further exacerbate the threat already posed to food security during the 2012/2013 agricultural season.
- The security situation in eastern **DRC** remains volatile, with a relative escalation of rebel and militia activity outside of North Kivu. There are currently an estimated 2.7 million IDPs in DRC, with 1.5 million in North and South Kivu alone. The rapidly deteriorating situation in Katanga, Maniema and Oriental Province is also of concern. Due to lack of road access, we have been obliged to airlift high-energy biscuits to thousands of recently-displaced people in Punia, an isolated town in Maniema

province. Since April 2012, when internal conflicts escalated, some 28,000 refugees have fled into neighbouring countries, and as of January 2012, an estimated 450,000 refugees have exited the DRC, the majority of which have fled to Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. To exacerbate this, there is also a recent influx of about 14,000 refugees from the Central African Republic crossing into DRC. Slow progress on the Kampala Peace Talks and the fact that a UN Special Envoy for DRC has not been appointed yet remain an issue. WFP is closely following ongoing consultations around the proposal of integrating a special intervention brigade into MONUSCO and how such a decision may affect delivery of assistance. Up to June 2013, WFP is aiming to assist 1.2 M beneficiaries under its EMOP, and 3.6M under its recovery and resilience activities.

- WFP's partnerships with host governments are expanding on many fronts. In 2012, WFP and the Ministry of Education in Namibia signed a two year MoU to strengthen the management of the national School Meals Programme. The Government contributed over US\$760,000 over a two year period for WFP to provide technical assistance. Also last November, **WFP and the Office of the Prime Minister in Namibia signed a two year MoU** to strengthen the management of Government - owned food assistance programmes.

- Lastly, I refer to the new PRRO 200453 entitled **Responding to Humanitarian Needs and Strengthening Resilience to Food Insecurity in Zimbabwe** which the Country Director, Mr. Felix Bamezon, will later this morning present for your consideration and approval.

Thank you, Mr. President.