

EB 1: OMJ Introductory Statement: February 2009

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, in eastern, central and southern Africa, WFP's operations are not just about filling empty stomachs but with providing more than 40 million people with the right combination of food that they need to develop into healthy productive human beings. Over the last few years, however, our work has become more challenging as the new face of hunger is often driven by macro and exogenous factors such as the food crisis, the financial crisis and climate change-droughts, floods, cyclones, etc.

WFP must directly address the hunger challenge; food insecurity is a winnable battle. Ensuring adequate access to affordable nutrition does not require new scientific breakthroughs. We are responding to this challenge with SMART¹ programmes that strengthen individual and household resilience to the causes of hunger and undernutrition. Some of the key activities taking place in eastern central and southern Africa include:

Local and Regional Procurement: WFP has been procuring food in Africa for decades and has spent over \$1.2 billion in food purchases in Africa from 2001 to 2007. In the OMJ region we rely heavily on the Republic of South Africa as a source for food assistance. In 2008 WFP bought 472,000 metric tons (\$163 million) of maize from South Africa. In 2009 the current indications suggest that throughout the SADC region the harvest will be 'normal' and we expect the Republic of South Africa to continue to be a key regional supplier to WFP. In Lesotho, WFP has been purchasing food from women conservation farmers. In Uganda, WFP intends to support GoU's agricultural market development endeavours by doubling procurement by 2011.

Purchase for Progress: The P4P initiative, undertaken in cooperation with the Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation, uses local markets and fair prices as incentives to small and medium farmers to increase cereal and pulse production. The long-term impact is to enable participating farms or farm groups to more effectively compete in local, national and eventually regional markets. In Mozambique we are using P4P as powerful leverage for partnership where WFP contracts with small farmer groups are being used as collateral to access micro-credit facilities from IFAD. FAO is providing training post-harvest handling and quality. The GoM considers P4P as a central pillar of the national poverty reduction agenda. Similar initiatives aimed at tackling hunger at its roots exist in Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia.

Cash and Vouchers not only provide assistance to needy people they also have the potential to encourage increased production and stimulate local market structures. In Swaziland, WFP and

¹ SMART specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-based.

Save the Children successfully implemented a cash programme that provided food insecure households with some money to enable them to procure the nutritious food they required.

Livelihood adaptation: Through innovative food for asset programs such as water harvesting, micro dams, and sustainable land management, WFP seeks to ensure that livelihoods are strengthened with the means to survive in unpredictable climatic environments. We will learn more about this on Wednesday when we discuss the Kenya PRRO.

- Climate Change and Environment Rehabilitation are being done through the provision of non-food assistance such as high energy efficient stoves and execution of reforestation programmes. In upcoming PRROs in Djibouti, Kenya and Tanzania; WFP, in support of national priorities, will be both reducing the demand for environmentally destructive charcoal and fuel wood whilst at the same time reforesting degraded land.
- WFP is also piloting several new food and nutrition based programs in the region aimed at making WFP's food more nutritious to vulnerable populations. In Kenya, for example, WFP is providing Micronutrient powder (sprinkles) to address micronutrient deficiencies in refugee populations. In Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, WFP is piloting the appropriateness of Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF), or Supplementary Plumpy, in treating moderate malnutrition in children under five. In Uganda, WFP is exploring possibilities of developing appropriate food products for managing moderate malnutrition using local foods, such as dried fish.

Despite these exciting and innovative actions, we are not out of the woods. Looking ahead, in 2009 it is unquestionable that the challenges faced throughout the region last year will continue to direct much of WFP's operation this year. The economic downturn in the world will negatively impact countries in the region in a major way. Remittances have started to decline in Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe due to mine and factory closures in South Africa. Ethiopia and Somalia are also feeling the pinch and these will have huge implications on health and nutrition in these countries.

I would now like to speak about how insecurity, limited humanitarian access, economic hardships, and worrisome harvest forecasts will continue to dictate our ability to lead the fight against hunger in the Horn of Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zimbabwe

Horn of Africa

Mr President the crisis in the Horn of Africa is not yet over. As distinguished Delegates are aware the HOA has, since mid 2007, come under assault from a series of interlinking challenges that

have plunged significant parts of the five constituent countries into hunger and nutritional crisis. Indeed 2009 will be another difficult year with below normal performance of short rains (20%), high food, fuel and fertilizer prices, export impediments and reduced informal trade and livestock diseases. The confluence of these factors is increasing malnutrition rates, vulnerability, school drop-outs, displacements, migration of pastoralists in search of water and pasture and a reduction in terms of trade between small ruminants and cereals.

As a result WFP estimates that there will 16 million people in the Horn of Africa that will be in need of assistance up to December 2009.

I would like to quickly give you a country by country overview.

Ethiopia

The after-effects of the successive droughts and high food prices that struck Ethiopia during 2008, pushing 12 million people into hunger, continue to pose significant challenges for WFP operations in the country in 2009.

The recently released inter-agency assessment report indicates that the harvest from the main crop is very good in the highlands but poor in the lowlands and close to 5 million people will be in need of emergency food and nutrition assistance in 2009. WFP operations will target 8.5 million people in total, including 5 million under its relief program, 2.4 million under the Government's Productive Safety net Programme and more than a million in targeted Supplementary Feeding Programmes and 164,000 HIV/AIDS patients and families.

Operations in 2009 will strongly focus on the Somali Region, where 1.7 million people are estimated to be in need of relief assistance. Acute malnutrition rates in the region hover around 23%.

Provision of assistance in this region has been complicated by a myriad of factors but they are being eased. There are bright spots as well which need to be told. The MERET programme, supported by WFP, using simple technologies like terracing, hill slope management, and enclosing degraded land to allow rejuvenation of agriculture lands, is working. Farmers are able to produce higher yields, more cash crops and are thus becoming better equipped to fight the war on hunger.

Somalia

The short rains forecasts for Somalia are 50-60% below normal, food prices continue to rise sharply and malnutrition rates are about 27% in the Bossaso IDP camps. WFP is increasing the amount of food it is delivering in South and Central Somalia, aiming to reach 2.5 million people in February. This will rise to 3.5 million per month under the new emergency operation starting in April, with a particular focus on child nutrition, and includes some 1 million people previously supported by CARE.

Piracy continues to be a major menace along the Somali coast, but the European Union has committed itself to escorting ships carrying WFP food for 2009.

Kenya

Kenya was badly hit by the failure of the short rains in marginal areas. Based on current information, there are also concerns that a la Nina could impact the long rains later this year. As a result, Kenya is expecting one its worse shortages of maize.

Maize prices in Kenya remain well above the average, despite government efforts to provide it at subsidised rates.

Uganda

Failed rains, livestock disease and soaring food prices have resulted in a 50% food gap in the Karamoja region until the next harvest in October. Malnutrition rates are estimated to be 15.4% in Kaabong District. As a result, WFP has prepared a new EMOP and increased the number of people in need of food and nutrition assistance from 750, 000 to 960,000. The region is also the main focus of WFP's development programme which aims to strengthen safety nets and livelihoods, as well as access to markets.

We will be discussing PRROs for Kenya and Uganda on Wednesday and I assure upon that the Board comments will be taken into account in the final documents that will be submitted to you in the coming weeks for approval by correspondence.

Djibouti

Djibouti was highly impacted by high food prices because of its heavy dependence on imports. The country also suffers from successive years of drought. Acute malnutrition rates are as high as 25% in Afar. Currently, about 80,000 people, mostly pastoralist, are being assisted with food and nutrition assistance by WFP. WFP has thus designed FFW activities to assist the most vulnerable in urban areas. Vouchers for work activities are also being considered.

WFP expects to provide food assistance for a total of 150,000 people in Djibouti this year.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Distinguished delegates will recall that fighting flared up between the forces of former General Nkunda and the Congolese army towards the end of October creating huge insecurity and large scale displacement in North Kivu. Side by side with this, LRA also attacked defenceless civilians in Orientale Province.

As a consequence of this complex and shifting conflict, WFP was obliged to revise the PRRO to cater to the food needs of additional 573,000 people which you kindly approved by correspondence in early December. In addition, some 30,000 refugees have crossed the border into Uganda and contingency plans indicate that hundreds of thousands could flee into Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. We will be meeting with our UNHCR colleagues next week to develop a joint HCR - WFP contingency plan for the Great Lakes Region.

Security conditions and access of humanitarian organisations are improving in many parts of North Kivu. However, the extremely unpredictable situation in Orientale Province remains a great concern. Given the rugged terrain and the long distance, WFP is forced to use a combination of road transport and airlifts from Uganda.

Currently, WFP has a shortfall of 57,000 MT valued at USD 76 Million over the next 12 months.

Zimbabwe

The food security situation in country remains precarious. A combination of worsening economic conditions, the liquidity crisis and lower than expected government food imports have led to an increase in food insecurity and in the number of people in need of food assistance. Community Household Surveillance conducted in November revealed that 19% of households sold assets in

order to buy food as compared to 10% in October; 60% of household consumed one meal a day as compared 13% in 2007.

The number of vulnerable people requiring food and nutrition assistance has increased. WFP distributed about 47,000 MT to about 4.1 million beneficiaries in December and intends to provide food to about 5.1 million in February and March.

Given the magnitude of the food needs and insufficiency of food nationally, rations have been reduced for most of the beneficiaries. The operation has a funding shortfall of about USD65 Million up to end of lean season in April.

WFP has been providing food assistance to cholera patients through NGOs since December. As the leader of the logistics cluster, WFP is also providing, upon request, transport and warehousing services to concerned agencies. This is working efficiently and appreciated by WHO and the humanitarian community at large. As WFP is in contact with about 90 percent of the rural population we could also act as delivery channel for water purification tablets on behalf of the entire UN family.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The world has responded and continues to respond to our call to fight hunger. Last year alone, WFP received some \$1.5 billion to address hunger and food production in eastern, central and southern Africa.

Last year, we did not prove our impotence, but our effectiveness. Your support saved lives, stabilized or reduced malnutrition rates of the most vulnerable, and provided an opportunity for millions of people in the region to stand up and join the fight against hunger. **This year we will not let those people down.** With your support and the determination of the destitute we can win this battle against hunger.

Thank you very much.