

OMJ ADDRESS TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD NOVEMBER 2014

Madam President, it is a great pleasure to address this esteemed Board this afternoon.

Introduction – lean season, harvest and weather forecast

This is the time of year that southern Africa heads into the so-called lean season, that period between harvests when farming families are largely dependent on whatever household food stocks they have been able to set aside. The good news is that, thanks to above-average rains, last season's harvest was fairly good across most the region, even producing surpluses in several countries. While hundreds of thousands of people in parts of countries like Malawi and Zimbabwe are expected to need seasonal food relief during this lean season and particularly during the peak months of the New Year, the numbers of those in need are substantially lower than in previous years.

The other positive news is that, according to regional forecasts, the bulk of southern Africa is likely to receive normal to above-normal rainfall during most of the cropping season between now and March next year. There are of course localized variations with areas such as southern Mozambique and southern Zimbabwe which have, in recent years, been getting normal to below-normal rains. To those parts we can add most of the DRC and the northern part of Angola which are also expected to receive normal to below-normal raining in coming months.

El Niño

However, as you know, we cannot afford to be complacent in southern Africa. The region is susceptible to drought, floods and cyclones, among

other hazards. Such shocks have serious consequences for vulnerable populations whose ability to cope has been eroded by the poor harvests which have affected much of the region in recent years. Current predictions for the emerging El Niño weather phenomenon are that it will be mild. However, its overall impact remains a bit unpredictable.

Regional procurement

The forecast for good rainfall is encouraging, not least because southern Africa is an important centre of agricultural production with even greater potential for growth. Southern Africa is currently WFP's second biggest procurement hub for cereals and its biggest hub worldwide for maize/maize based products. WFP has bought 4.6 million metric tonnes of food worth US\$ 1.35 billion in the last 12 years in countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This year alone, we have bought 186,880 MT of food worth US\$ 77 million in the SADC region. Zambia has long proved itself as a producer of surplus cereals. This year, we were even able to source cow peas in Zimbabwe, not just because they were of good quality but because they were the cheapest in the region.

Smallholders and P4P

Our work with smallholder farmers in southern Africa is particularly valuable. WFP's procurement capacity is an important tool that can be used to uplift smallholder farmers and keep them out of hunger and poverty. We are currently transitioning to a new phase of integrating pro smallholder procurement into programming in the region, building on the lessons from our Purchase for Progress initiative which we piloted in five countries in southern Africa. We are concentrating on linking farmer groups we've been working with to markets beyond WFP. For example, 10 P4P farmer groups in Tanzania have signed contracts with the National Food Reserve Agency

totaling 10,000MT of maize and have already delivered more than half that quantity. This was all facilitated by WFP.

Thanks to a donation of US 20 million (R 180 million) from South Africa, we have purchased more than 3,000 metric tonnes of maize and sugar beans – worth US\$ 1.2 million - from emerging South African farmers. These commodities are part of a hunger relief package for Lesotho where we are reaching more than a quarter of a million vulnerable women and children while providing new skills to 500 plus small holder farmers in South Africa through a series of targeted activities

Disaster preparedness

In Madagascar, WFP is working closely with the government, prepositioning 1,600 metric tonnes of food in our partners' warehouses in cyclone- and flood-prone areas which will enable us to assist as many as 180,000 people over the period of a week.

WFP has also been supporting the government of Mozambique where a national contingency plan for 2014/2015 has been recently approved. The principal scenario envisages up to 318,000 people needing assistance due to a combination of floods, cyclones, drought and storms. We are currently looking at resourcing options to enable prepositioning of supplies along the main access corridors ahead of the critical period between January and March.

Ebola

Despite an outbreak of ebola having resulted in the loss of 49 lives in DRC, southern Africa has been spared the worst ravages of the epidemic that is devastating much of West Africa. The remoteness of the Boende ebola zone

in Equateur province has proved a real challenge for health workers traveling there – but it has also been a blessing, making it easier to stop the virus from spreading to more populated areas. The area’s remoteness has also meant that logistics has been key to addressing the challenge. WFP and UNHAS are proud to have played a critical role in what is being regarded so far as a successful attempt to contain the epidemic. WFP has provided food assistance to some 23,000 people – not only those who have been affected by the virus but also those who have been placed in quarantine, and also these people’s families. WFP has also provided vital logistics and telecommunications solutions while UNHAS has provided the all-important aviation services linking the ebola zone with the outside world.

At the same time, we would like to commend the Government of the DRC and the communities in the ebola zone for having put in place strong health structures which enabled them to mount such a robust response to the epidemic.

I would also like to note that steps are being taken elsewhere in our region by SADC and OCHA to enhance preparedness in order to be able to deal with any further outbreaks of the virus.

DRC

On the subject of The DRC, Security has improved with the disarming of rebel groups in the east, enabling some 1.8 million displaced people to return home. However, food insecurity persists, affecting millions of people. WFP is also struggling to give life-saving assistance to 1.3 million people in the face of severe resourcing challenges.

Investment

One thing that has become very clear to me since my arrival in the region earlier this year is that southern Africa is an area to invest in, not just because it has real needs but, more importantly, because such investment makes a big difference and produces important returns. Attending to proper nutrition, as we now realize, is in fact smart economics.

Stunting

With nearly 5 out of every 10 of its children stunted, Malawi has one of the highest rates of stunting in the world.

Stunting may be irreversible but it is also preventable in the crucial 1,000 days between conception and two years of age.

That is why we are excited to be part of a unique prevention of stunting project in one district of Malawi. The project ensures not just that young children and pregnant and nursing women get the nutrition they need but also focuses on improving the behaviour of communities across a whole range of practices including diet, hygiene and sanitation. It is hoped that this initiative, which is being funded by the CIFF - Children's Investment Fund Foundation - , can be a model for the reduction of stunting not just in Malawi but all around the world.

GCNF

We were particularly happy in September join the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil in supporting the Global Child Nutrition Forum, the world's foremost event on school feeding. 300 participants from more than 20 countries gathered at a venue outside Johannesburg to consider how best governments can establish sustainable school feeding programmes, especially those linked to the purchase of food from smallholder farmers.

Among the recommendations adopted by the Forum were that school feeding programmes linked to production by smallholder farmers should be integral to the achievement of the Zero Hunger Challenge and that school feeding should be regarded as investment by governments, not as an expenditure.

School feeding

Of the total of 10.9 million people to whom we give food assistance in the Southern Africa region, 3.7 million or one third of those are children. Ten of out 11 of our country offices support government in the implementation of school feeding programmes. In Namibia, we continue to give technical assistance to the government as to how best to run their school meals programme. The feedback we are getting is that the government regards WFP as the right partner for the job – not only do they say that on the basis of track record and reputation but also because, in the business of school feeding, we are at the forefront of inter-linkage with agricultural production and policy development.

Capacity development is central to what we are doing in school meals and other areas. We are currently working with the governments of Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, the Republic of Congo and Zambia to help them transition to national school meal programmes through the development of national school feeding policies. Indeed, it is fair to say we have helped the governments of these countries put school feeding right up there on the national agenda. We are also helping a number of countries, including Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, in the development of national Home Grown School Feeding programmes involving produce locally sourced from smallholder farmers.

Home Grown School Feeding in Malawi

And I was very glad to have witnessed the benefits of such a home grown school feeding programme when I visited, last week, Thelma school in Mangochi district in southern Malawi. I met with the district officials, the school principal, the school children, the volunteer cooks, and the farmers who had sold a range of different locally produced food stuffs to the school. There were obvious benefits for the children in terms of the dietary diversity of a locally sourced meal – you can see from the pictures on the screen - maize mixed with groundnut, spinach with tomato and onion, and a mango- and the menu for the week was quite mouth watering! Since the programme began, the rate of drop outs has reduced to 0%. The school is still learning how to accurately budget each quarter and submit timely reports, and the farmers are eager to look at opportunities of selling their surplus to additional schools and are lobbying for faster payment from the district officials who receive the funds from WFP. The sense of commitment, ownership and pride evident in all the community members that I met, underlined the potential of HGSF to significantly contribute to resilience building .

World Humanitarian Summit

Just a couple of weeks ago, our DED, Amir Abdulla, Valerie Guarnieri and I attended the Regional Consultation for Eastern and Southern Africa of the World Humanitarian Summit which was held in Pretoria. Co-hosted by the governments of South Africa and Ethiopia, it was co-chaired by OCHA, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and SADC, and brought together participants from some two dozen countries in the two sub-regions.

In all, 16 recommendations were made concerning a host of issues including resilience building and engagement with the private sector for humanitarian

innovation. Challenging but important recommendations that particularly struck me were that 1. Governments' duty to address humanitarian needs and to invest in resilience-building must be reinforced and 2. That we should recognize and amplify the voices of affected communities by engaging them in all stages of humanitarian preparedness and response. We in southern Africa are committed to enhancing our effectiveness in the humanitarian process as we work alongside partners including the African Union, SADC and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In Conclusion

Madam President, While so many eyes are turned towards the big emergencies unfolding elsewhere in the world, and rightly so, we must not lose sight of the challenges and the opportunities confronting us in other regions such as southern Africa. The wellbeing of our some 12 million beneficiaries this year - and the often hidden food insecurity and hunger challenges that they face - depends on it as does our ability to assist them. Linked with the pursuance of the Zero Hunger Challenge, we can make great strides in southern Africa using innovative tools and partnerships coupled with a new way of thinking and acting.

Madam President and Members of the Board, I THANK YOU.