

Executive Board
November 2014
OMC Regional Director Statement
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General Update on the Region

- Ladies and gentlemen, it is very challenging to provide you with an update from the OMC region in such a limited time. Current conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and the unrest in Libya, Ukraine, Yemen and Sudan are expected to continue and add to the growing number of refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs).
- Since the last board, I have visited Yemen, Palestine, Iraq and the Libya operations and I have to say that the situation is quite worrisome in most of these countries. The sheer scale, unpredictability and trans-boundary nature of the conflicts, the drained economies and the pressed regional structures present serious concerns.

Response to the Humanitarian crisis

- **WFP** continues to face complex challenges in the region in terms of the insecurity and political instability, the increasing presence of non-state actors throughout the region, and rising tensions between refugees and host communities. Despite these challenges, WFP is **busy scaling up its response to the different humanitarian crisis**.
- You will hear later today on our operations in Palestine, but I wish to take a moment to thank Mr. Robert Turner, UNRWA Director of Operations and one of the main counterparts for our Country Office, who is joining us in support of the new document that will be presented for your kind approval. This truly demonstrates the strong partnership spirit that we have with UNRWA.
- The political and security situation remains critical in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, with a serious impact on people's livelihoods, worsening an already fragile

food security situation. During the 50-days conflict in Gaza more than 2,100 Palestinians were killed; almost one third of Gaza's population was uprooted from their homes—Our partner, UNRWA, lost eleven staff members in the course of the conflict.

- Despite the crisis, we were able to rapidly scale up our emergency food assistance. The already functioning food pipelines and strong coordination with partners made it possible to provide ready to eat food to 340,000 IDPs. We are grateful for the support received from the Government of Egypt that gave us access to our convoys to provide critical support. In addition to providing emergency response, 285,000 people who were already food insecure before the conflict received support.
- Ladies and gentlemen, we are quite concerned about the developments in **Yemen**. I was Country Director for Yemen back in the mid90s and have been on mission there on several occasions, including a mission with the ED last year, and I can honestly say that Yemen today poses a totally different set of complex challenges than ever before. The security situation and the changing political landscape present several operational constraints. Conflicts and clashes impede access to the affected populations. In July, in the wake of conflict in Amran, north of Sanaa, and subsequent looting of some WFP assets, WFP Yemen had to close down the sub-office but continued to provide humanitarian assistance there from Sanaa. While our staff safety remains our biggest priority, we are updating contingency plans and developing different management modalities.
- Moving on to our L3s, **Iraq** is truly becoming a complex environment, the challenges we are facing today are a manifestation of decades of sectorial tensions, governance and humanitarian needs.

- We continue to expand support to address the increasing needs resulting from the offensives led by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which took control in June of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, as well as other towns, causing rapid mass displacement. In August, another offensive surge caused the displacement of approximately 600,000 additional people, bringing the total number of displaced people across Iraq up to 1.8 million. The KRI now hosts almost half of all IDPs, particularly Dohuk Governorate which is the recipient of almost a quarter of Iraq's IDP caseload.
- Lack of humanitarian access and a fluid situation on the ground continue to hamper the humanitarian response in areas controlled by Armed Groups. **Yet, despite a challenging security situation and the rapid movement of displaced people, WFP has successfully distributed food to over 1.4 million people across all 18 governorates in Iraq since June 2014.** This is a considerable scale up of the operation which was originally launched in April to respond to the needs of 240,000 displaced people from Al-Anbar governorate in the central part. I wish to take a moment to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the generous contribution of US\$ 500 million to the UN system, of which WFP received US\$ 150 million, none of that support would be possible without your assistance.
- *What's next?* WFP plans to reach an estimated 1.8 million people per month by March 2015. The type of food assistance and the modality by which it is delivered will vary according to the specific vulnerabilities of beneficiaries, and their ability to access the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- Moving on to **Syria**, we have, particularly over recent months, seen significant progress in establishing a more comprehensive and holistic picture of the food security sector. This is in no small measure the result of early investments in

Food Security Sector coordination, which is now managing to pull together all major actors operating from within Syria and from its neighbouring countries.

- This progress includes reaching common agreement on the estimated number of people in need. While a comprehensive assessment of all governorates has not been possible in 2014, a combination of a wide range of available sources were analyzed by an inter-agency team of Food Security Sector. More than 6.4 million people have been displaced inside the country– many multiple times. Around 9.8 million people are believed to be in need of food with 6.8 million of them located in high priority areas.
- Since the passing of UNSCR 2165 in July, WFP has reached over 215,000 people living in hard-to-reach areas in Idleb, Aleppo, Dar’a and Quneitra governorates through the delivery of cross-border assistance. These operations complement continuing efforts to increase the reach from within Syria, contributing to WFP’s ability to dispatch food sufficient for a record 4.16 million people in August, followed by 3.9 million in September- worsening security conditions have led to a gradual reduction in access, particularly in the north-eastern and Homs governorates.
- Vulnerability assessments and targeting of beneficiaries is a clear focus in the final quarter of the year, and in many countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon, this has been an ongoing process. WFP’s 2015 plans will clearly focus interventions in a more targeted manner. For example; in Jordan targeting of refugees in host communities began in October, reducing the caseload by around 7 percent (some 36,000 people) during the initial stage, to be further reduced by 8 percent in December.
- *What’s next?* While focus will need to remain squarely on the delivery of food assistance, there will be greater emphasis on longer-term interventions that strengthen resilience (including the restoration of livelihoods in Syria),

contribute to local capacity building, and – in the region - support national priorities and plans, where possible.

- **Sudan** is currently situated in a region characterized by large-scale/L3 emergencies, including South Sudan and the Central African Republic. The potential for spillover remains a concern.
- On a more positive note, while the operating environment in Sudan remains extremely challenging, and access to non-government held areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile State has yet to materialize, there have been significant breakthroughs vis-à-vis humanitarian space in recent months, most notably in Jebel Marra (Darfur), Abyei and with the opening up of the humanitarian corridor between Sudan and South Sudan after the governments signed a of understanding in July 2014. The first convoy of 20 trucks, carrying 700 mt of food for 45,000 people for a period of one month, proceeded to South Sudan on Friday 7 November and reached Rack on 8 November.
- *What's next?* In 2015, WFP plans to continue with an emergency operation (EMOP) designed to support 4 million conflict-affected people in Sudan, including 3.1 million in Darfur and 885,000 in Eastern Sudan at a total cost of US\$370 million. The EMOP reflects the country's strategy to respond to humanitarian needs and aims to better target food assistance based upon vulnerability rather than status and gradually transition protracted IDPs to more sustainable, conditional assistance including through IDP profiling in 50 camps.
- **Moving briefly to emerging crisis, the RB is spearheading the WFP response in **Ukraine** and **Libya**.** WFP is supporting groups of the most vulnerable populations and assessments are underway to inform future programming in both countries.

- In **Ukraine**, through the IR-EMOP, WFP is reaching 28,000 IDPs and conflict affected individuals. Building upon current operations, a full Emergency Operation (EMOP) which was just approved will target up to 120,000 among the most vulnerable IDPs, returnees and resident populations through either in-kind or C&V food assistance beginning in November.
- In **Libya**, the conflict between nationalists and Islamist-backed militias led to the re-escalation of hostilities and violence across the country. Use of heavy weaponry against civilians and civilian infrastructure, by all parties to conflict, has resulted in civilian casualties, displacement, and deterioration in living conditions.
- Over the next five months, building on WFP’s ongoing food assistance in response to the displacement, a WFP Emergency Operation plans to reach 115,000 beneficiaries which represents around one-third of the displaced or at risk across the country.
- Thanks to the support of the governments of Tunisia and Egypt, WFP will be providing cross-border support to both west and east Libya when the security situation allows.

Resilience Building, Social Protection and Safety Nets _____

- Parallel to scaling up WFP response to the humanitarian crisis, OMC is working on embedding elements of resilience and supporting social protection and safety nets across the region. Such as WFP’s support to the development of the National Resilience Plan (NRP) for 2014-2016 in Jordan; and the assistance provided to 15,000 smallholders in Egypt to adapt to climate-induced impacts on food security.

- With the approach of the difficult winter season, WFP is placing a strong emphasis on monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation particularly in countries in Central Asia which are also facing multiple pressures as a result of higher food and fuel prices and drought conditions.

School Feeding

- School feeding remains to be one of the main programmes WFP uses in support of safety nets. We continue to implement such programmes in 12 countries, supporting 3.8 million beneficiaries. Emphasis is placed on linking school feeding programmes with local production, such as in the case of Jordan and Egypt whereby school feeding meals consist of locally produced fortified Date Bars.
- WFP and the European Union signed a Cooperation Agreement for a 60 million Euro four-year project on “Enhancing Access of Children to Education and Fighting Child Labour” on 3 July 2014. The project will reach up to 100,000 children and 400,000 family members annually, and will be rolled out in areas where poverty and food insecurity are the highest.

Introducing and Expanding the Voucher Programmes

- The OMC is proving to be quite the region for the use of C&V as an efficient and effective modality. Today, C&V are used in long running operations such as in Sudan reaching 520,000 beneficiaries in 2014, or in response to emerging humanitarian needs such as most recently in Ukraine where WFP has launched Voucher distributions in northern Donetsk targeting 10,000 IDPs. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), a voucher transfer modality will commence in November, targeting 190,000 individuals.

- In addition to the direct impact on food consumption scores, a clear impact can be seen on the local economies. During the Gaza crisis, US\$9 million dollars were injected into the local economy through emergency vouchers since July 2014.
- WFP assistance in response to the Syria crisis through the voucher modality has injected some US\$753 million (as of end September) in the region since the start of operations.

Conclusions

- Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to say that the challenges in our region require strong political support solutions which are not evident in the short term. Until that time, the humanitarian community must maintain its assistance to those in need as our support is central to any wider peace efforts and failure to do so would also entail significant negative consequences for the entire region.
- Our needs are higher than ever before, the Syria Regional response alone, the November- December requirements currently at US\$241 million. As we continue to scale up in Iraq, WFP is facing a complete pipeline break in February 2015. Unless US\$27 million can be contributed for the month of February, 1.8 million people in Iraq will be left without life-saving food assistance.
- Before I conclude and pass the floor to Robert and to our newly arrived Country Director Daniela who will present the PRRO for Palestine, I would like to reiterate the need for relief and recovery assistance in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, where the situation remains critical and highly volatile.
- Thank you for your support.