

ODJ Introductory Statement: EB 2/2012

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the last Board session in June, I briefed you on our work on HIV Aids and Nutrition. This time, I would like to update you on two interrelated issues that command our attention. These are the drought emergency which is currently unfolding in part of Southern Africa as well as the partnerships that we are strengthening to buttress and support the interventions that are being jointly developed and implemented with governments, UN agencies and IFIs.

Despite the good overall harvest in 2012 harvest season, Southern Africa region is experiencing localized drought since August of this year affecting Lesotho, southern Malawi, Madagascar, Swaziland and south west Zimbabwe. About 5.5 million people are affected. The situation is very severe with rising levels of vulnerability, high market price for maize and steady worsening of the social and economic indicators. Donor response remains low.

Working with beneficiaries themselves, respective host governments, stakeholders and shareholders, WFP is adopting a two-pronged response strategy to the drought: Hand-outs for the most vulnerable and hands-up for the rest of the affected population in partnership with FAO, WVI and host governments to strengthen resilience to future shocks.

As a matter of fact, WFP and FAO have developed a Road Map for Disaster Risk Reduction to be implemented in Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. We can only turn the tide on hunger if we give the people and their governments the tools to prepare for recurrent shocks so as to strengthen their resilience and ability to cope.

It is heartening to note that both the governments of Malawi and Zimbabwe contributed 35,000 MT of maize to the relief operations through WFP. In ensuring a more holistic and integrated approach to resilience, a number of complementary measures are being implemented such as mainstreaming of gender, private sector advocacy and capacity strengthening of the local communities and governments.

Distinguished members would recall that I told you that an MOU with SADC was signed in May this year to facilitate our joint partnership to improve food and nutrition security in the region. I would like to inform you that an action plan in support of that MoU has been prepared and is under implementation. Principal of these actions are the restructuring and revitalisation of VACs. SADC countries are also working on harmonization of their disaster laws which will make the sharing of knowledge easier. WFP has already indicated to them its willingness to assist.

Southern Africa region is the epicenter of the world's HIV epidemic. As distinguished members recall from our last EB discussion on this subject, I informed you that 7 out of the ten

highest prevalence countries in the world are in the region and out of these, 4 countries are at hyper-endemic levels.

HIV/AIDS and malnutrition are mutually reinforcing and under-nutrition increases maternal and infant mortality. It is therefore very important to focus on these twin issues in tandem because rates of chronic malnutrition are among the highest in the world – Malawi (53%); Madagascar (50%); Zambia (44%), Mozambique (40%). In this regard, WFP continues to reinforce partnerships with other agencies such as UNICEF, UNAIDS, governments, donors, and other stakeholders to ensure access to the right food at the right time, especially during the chronic window of opportunity of the first 1000 days between conception and the age of two years. We also strengthen food-by prescription programmes, assist governments in upstream policy formulation to assist not only HIV infected populations, but also orphans and vulnerable children. As a matter of fact, Swaziland was designated in September as a sub-recipient of a Global Fund grant which will allow us to programme \$9.2 million to support orphans and vulnerable children in Swaziland. This is the largest single grant that WFP has received from the Global Fund in recent years.

Side by side with these programmes on HIV/AIDS we also focus on the work on combatting malnutrition where Mozambique puts into action REACH principles and both Mozambique and Malawi have become countries where WFP is working with the Children Investment Fund and Foundation (CIFF) to improve the evidence on the cost-effectiveness of food-based nutrition interventions to prevent stunting. This work is backed up by close partnerships with UNICEF and GAIN to design and implement cost-effective

strategies for tackling malnutrition for children below two years of age. Food fortification using locally produced food is also being promoted.

The situation in the region is not gloom and doom. There are bright spots.

We are using our location in South Africa to reinforce partnership with RSA. Currently the RSA government is developing its South Africa Development Partnership Agency and designing procedures for managing its African Renaissance Fund which many WFP operations in Africa and beyond have benefited from already. WFP has held high level discussions with the government on this and promised to assist with technical assistance for developing SADPA and ARF. Furthermore, WFP is assisting the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen its partnership with the government of Brazil within the framework of south to south cooperation to explore how it can benefit from Brazil's experience with school feeding and the Zero Hunger campaign.

Private sector opportunities are being explored not only for provision of financial resources but also capacity building. Conversations have started with many of them and notably Walmart and DSM. With Walmart opportunities for leveraging the network of maize millers for the benefit of P4P farmers are being explored while DSM is in the process of providing a nutritionist to the regional bureau. The recruitment is underway.

The region is also a major procurement location for Non-GMO maize. The Zambia government has recently authorized WFP to purchase about 60,000 MT for its humanitarian operations. More could be purchased as demand for non-GMO surges and the new maize crop comes into the market. We appreciate this kind gesture by the government.

Thank you Mr. President.