

OMJ Introductory Statement: EB 2, June 2008

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen

OMJ has one item for your consideration, which is the Kenya Country Programme 2009-2013. Before introducing it to you, I would like to give you an overview of critical food security challenges in other parts of OMJ region. I would like to cover the following topics:

1. Effects of Soaring food prices in the region:

The rapid rise in food and fuel prices has swept the region by storm throwing vulnerable children, lactating mothers, pregnant women and elderly off the edge. Most of these people are family members of either pastoralists or small sedentary farmers who typically spend about 80% of their income on food. In Somalia, prices soared around 375%, in Mozambique fuel prices soared around 50% sparking of riots. Similar conditions prevail in other countries of the region.

WFP is closely working with governments, AU/NEPAD and other stakeholders to ensure that food assistance is embedded in hunger and undernutrition solutions. Therefore, the generous donations recently announced by traditional and non traditional donors will enable WFP to help keep children in school, meet urgent nutritional needs of children under 2, pregnant women, lactating mothers, pastoralists and small farmers.

2. Drought in Horn of Africa + Karamoja in Uganda

Throughout the Horn of Africa (HOA), the short rains (October to December 2007) were sporadic and long rains have been erratic at best. Pasture and water availability are poor. Other compounding factors include:

- Shortage of improved seeds;
- High food and energy costs;
- Unavailability of fertilizer;
- Lack of draught power for tillage
- Insecurity in Somalia and Karamoja
- Devaluation of the Somali shilling.

The HOA is inhabited mainly by pastoralist and small farmers who have been hit hardest by the soaring food and fuel prices. In Somalia where I visited about two weeks ago, food prices soared to about 375 percent since October of last year whilst the Somali shilling depreciated to an average of 80 percent. I had discussions with local authorities, pastoralists, NGO partners and urban poor. The story of one of the Somalis I spoke to, Ms Fatuma Abucar of Alemu village is very telling indeed. She narrated how she and her family of 6 survive on only one meal a day and how food distributed by WFP represents their only hope for survival. The terms of trade between small ruminants and cereals have deteriorated because of the soaring cereal prices. Last year, one goat could fetch 150 KGs of sorghum but this year it can only buy 50 KGs of sorghum. In some of the villages, people are running out of options and resort to eating wild vegetables. I also spoke to a representative of ACF and she told me that malnutrition rates have increased from 14.3% in October of last year to 22.4% in April of this year and admission rates in the therapeutic feeding centres have also doubled. This type of situation is common to other pastoralist regions of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda and Kenya.

As a result of the collision of these troubles with high food prices topping the list, WFP, concerned governments and other partners have carried out assessments in the entire HOA and the following has emerged or is emerging:

- In **Somalia**, FSAU and FEWSNET declared a humanitarian emergency and warned that about 2.6 million people are at risk and need assistance now and this figure could rise to 3.5 million by December if no immediate action is taken;
- In **Ethiopia**, GOE and partners estimate about 7.6 million people are in dire need of food assistance through September. The situation is more critical in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), Oromiya and Somali Region, while in Amhara, Afar and Tigre are emerging as areas of concern.;
- In **Kenya**, assessments are being planned in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. Current caseload of 900,000 could rise up to 3.5 million people if worse fears are confirmed.
- In **Djibouti**, current estimates indicate that 66,000 people could be affected and this may rise to 85,000;

- In **Uganda**, 700,000 Karamajong need assistance up to December, and this could rise to as high as 1,000,000.
- In **Eritrea**, No CFSAM was authorised since 2005. Government has done its own assessment and estimates that current harvest will cover 65% of requirements and the gap will be filled by imports from Sudan.

3. Situation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has been gripped in the throes of hyperinflation for some time now and the recent spate of increases in cereal prices had made matters worse. It has literally put food beyond the means of the country's most vulnerable. Eating one meal a day is now commonplace in rural areas and the worse hit are urban poor, pregnant women, lactating mothers, school going children, HIV/AIDS patients and small farmers. WFP's monitoring shows that average price of grain in Zimbabwe's four urban centres has increased from about 10 million Zimbabwean dollars in mid-April to 120 million Zimbabwean dollars by end of May. Zimbabwe is highly dependent on food and fuel imports.

Compounding this already difficult situation is the poor performance of the main 2008 harvest. Government estimates local production to be about 689,000 MT of cereals which represents a 50% reduction from last year's production. Annual consumption requirements are equivalent to 1.9 million tons. GOZ has invited FAO and WFP to verify these figures through a crop assessment and food supply mission. This mission has completed its field work and report writing is in progress and expected to be finished before the end of this month.

If GOZ preliminary estimates are verified by the CFSAM mission, over 650,000 MT of international relief assistance may be required, of which WFP could be expected to provide some 500,000 MT and C-SAFE the balance.

This notwithstanding, I would like to inform distinguished members of the Board that the GOZ has as of 4 June suspended all field operations by all international and national NGOs in Zimbabwe. This prevents 314,000 vulnerables (orphans, the elderly, the disabled, school children, HIV-positive

bed-ridden people at home and patients receiving anti-retroviral therapy treatment for HIV-AIDS or tuberculosis) from receiving their June rations.

This suspension will also impact plans by NGOs to feed up to 300,000 people in June and these are in addition to what WFP plans to distribute through its partner NGOs.

4. Situation in DRC.

The situation in DRC is rapidly deteriorating leading to huge population movements. Over half a million people have been displaced since July last year.

The security situation in North Kivu has not improved as expected after the elections in April 2007. Large parts of the province are still under the control of armed factions. A large deployment of the DR Congo army in the second half of 2007 has not stabilized the area, and the peace agreement of Goma signed in January of 2008 has not worked but instead clashes with militias increased. Internal displacement increased since beginning from 320,000 at beginning of 2007 to 840,000 now, (an almost three fold increase).

WFP needs to increase monthly distributions fourfold in the province of North Kivu, from the 2,000 MT planned in the original PRRO to over 8,000 MT.

5. Budget Revisions are being prepared.

Budget Revisions are required for the situations that I have just described and they will be submitted to you for your consideration and approval in due course

6. Kenya Country Programme.

My final task is to introduce for your consideration the Kenya draft Country Programme which is proposed to cover the period 2009-2013. I visited Kenya operations for the first time last month and I was struck by one thing, ie, the level of poverty and hunger of the population residing in the geographic areas of concern to WFP and left with the conviction that what

we are putting before you is a very cost-effective and results-oriented Country Programme. I will not delve into its finer details since all of you have copies in front of you but suffice to say the following:

1. It is in harmony with the “Vision 2030” which in turn, is supported by the United Nations development Assistance Framework (UNDAF);
2. It is gender-sensitive;
3. It is geographically targeted;
4. It puts a strong accent on partnerships especially with UNICEF;
5. Discussed with resident donors in Nairobi who are very supportive of its strategic direction and geographic focus.

Thank you Mr. President.