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REPORT ON THE FIELD VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO OF THE WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal point indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Secretary to the Executive Board: Ms E. Joergensen tel.: 066513-2603

Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. The Executive Board members who participated in the field visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) wish to express their appreciation to the WFP country team in Kinshasa and Goma, which is led by Country Director Mr Martin Ohlsen, for its professionalism, dedication and support. Even though the situation in the country was changing dramatically just before the arrival of the delegation, the field trip was well planned and organized.

INTRODUCTION

2. The delegation visited DRC from 8 to 15 September 2013. It was led by H.E. Evelyn Anita Stokes-Hayford, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana, Vice-President of the Board and Vice-President of the Bureau. The other members were H.E. Thomas Wriessnig, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany; Ms Sylvia Wohlers de Meie, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Guatemala; Mr Nii Quaye-Kumah, Minister Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative of Ghana; Mr Victor Fedorinov, First Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation; Mr Esteban Pagaran, Attaché and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Philippines; and Mr Jan-Artur Sienczewski, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of the European Union. The delegation was accompanied by Ms Erika Joergensen, Secretary to the Board.
3. The purposes of the field visit were to: i) observe WFP field operations; ii) observe WFP as a partner with the Government; iii) observe WFP as a partner in the United Nations country team (UNCT), with a focus on collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies; iv) study the implementation of WFP policies in the field, particularly in Goma and Katanga; v) study programming and programme delivery; and vi) discuss the impact of WFP's programmes with government and non-government counterparts at all levels.
4. The programme of the visit, the meetings held and site visits conducted are attached as an Annex.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONTEXT, AND FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

5. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a low-income, food-deficit country. It is the second-largest country in Africa, and has the third-largest population – 75.5 million, with a fertility rate of 6.3 – of whom 78 percent live in rural areas; population growth is 2.6 percent per year. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP, 6.3 million Congolese require food and agriculture assistance, and 2.5 million children are affected by acute malnutrition.
6. The situation in DRC is one of the world's most complex and long-standing large-scale humanitarian crises.
7. Although DRC has great agricultural and mining potential, national capacities to address poverty and humanitarian crises are reduced because 40 percent of the national budget is spent on activities related to insurgency. The country continues to suffer from the

consequences of armed conflict and displacement of its people, a situation that has hampered the smooth operation of its governance processes and weakened government authority. In eastern DRC many locations are occupied by various armed groups, and there is no government presence whatsoever. The crisis has deepened significantly over the past year as a result of the increased activity of armed groups and an escalation of fighting between DRC armed forces and armed groups in North Kivu, Maniema and Katanga provinces. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) rose between 2012 and 2013 from 1.8 million to 2.6 million. Equateur and Oriental provinces are experiencing an influx of refugees from neighbouring Central African Republic. Humanitarian activities in DRC continue to depend on international support.

8. Human rights violations are widespread: these include harassment, sexual exploitation, forced recruitment of boys and girls as child soldiers, abduction, looting and theft; 4,300 rapes were registered in the first half of 2012, mostly in North and South Kivu.
9. HIV is a public health problem. HIV prevalence was 2.6 percent in 2012, and 3.2 percent among pregnant women. Half of the population lack access to drinking water, and 80 percent of households have inadequate sanitation. School enrolment is hampered by population displacements, insecurity, destruction and occupation of schools, forced recruitment by rebel groups, early marriage and child labour. In North Kivu, 40 percent of children do not attend school because of their parents' inability to meet school-related expenses, even though government policy provides for free primary education.
10. Following recent security-related events, in March 2013 the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2098 endorsing a new and comprehensive approach in addressing the recurring cycles of violence in eastern DRC. This constitutes a strong political and military mandate for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which has been working in the country for the past 13 years, and provides for an Intervention Brigade. The new mandate of MONUSCO also supports transitional governance, the establishment of democratic institutions, electoral assistance, monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, development of human rights oversight capacities, security-sector reforms, protection of civilians, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.
11. Resolution 2098 also requires MONUSCO to produce a timeline for the transfer of tasks to the UNCT, particularly in non-conflict areas. WFP is engaged through the UNCT and its New York office in the planning of the transfer, which could include the provision of food assistance for 55,000 demobilized combatants and increased United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) capacity.

THE FIELD VISIT

12. In Kinshasa, Board members met the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and experts from the International Cooperation Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Meetings were also held with: Mr Moustapha Soumaré, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General; programme, logistics and UNHAS staff of WFP; Mr Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and representatives of the UNCT.

13. During the visit to North Kivu province, the Board members met in Goma with the Vice-Governor of the Province Mr Feller Lutaichirwa Mulwahale, with Mr Ray Virgilio Torres, MONUSCO Head of Office in North Kivu, and with members of the Goma humanitarian community of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The delegation also visited the Heal Africa Hospital, which treats victims of sexual violence and children living with HIV/AIDS; the hospital is supported by WFP through food assistance in the form of supplementary feeding for HIV-positive children and food for training for the victims of sexual violence.
14. In Kitchanga, the group visited a Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) camp for displaced people, and observed general food distribution for IDPs, supplementary feeding for malnourished children and school feeding. The delegation was unable to visit the food-for-work activities, but they were discussed.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Relationship with the Government

15. WFP has been working in DRC for many years. According to government authorities in the Province of North Kivu, humanitarian interventions, especially those of WFP, are very important: without them the situation of IDPs would be catastrophic. By the end of August 2013, there were over 1 million IDPs in North Kivu province, of whom 703,288 were living with host families, 201,916 in spontaneous public sites and 154,220 in CCCM camps. The work of WFP, especially in North Kivu, is significant in supporting IDPs and other vulnerable people: it consists of providing food for IDPs, supplementary feeding for malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women, food for work – agricultural/livelihood projects for IDP returnees and vulnerable host families – and food support for victims of sexual violence and people living with HIV and AIDS. In order to reach these vulnerable people, WFP also repairs and builds roads and bridges through its special operations.
16. WFP is considered a major partner in humanitarian assistance, poverty reduction and development; it has developed very good relations with the Government in Kinshasa. All the members of the Government met by the delegation expressed their appreciation for the work of WFP, whose relations with members of the Government are characterized by a sense of partnership. During the meeting with the authorities of North Kivu, the delegation had the impression that WFP was seen as a provider of useful services, but there were few expressions of involvement or ownership of the programmes on the part of the provincial government.

Relationship with the United Nations Country Team

17. The United Nations Secretary-General appointed Mr Moustapha Soumaré of Mali as his Deputy Special Representative in the United Nations mission in DRC. Mr Soumaré also serves as United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme. Mr Ohlsen, WFP Country Director, is regularly appointed as Humanitarian Coordinator *ad interim* when Mr Soumaré is absent. The relationship between the Humanitarian Coordinator and WFP is outstanding.
18. The UNCT consists of 19 United Nations organizations, two Bretton Woods institutions – the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – and the International

Organization for Migration (IOM); some of these are also members of the humanitarian country team. The UNCT and the humanitarian country team are present in 42 locations with 1,000 international and 3,000 national staff. Their annual portfolio averages US\$720 million. Implementation of the humanitarian action plan for 2013 requires US\$893 million, of which only 52 percent is funded at the present time.

19. The humanitarian partners met by the delegation in Goma expressed their satisfaction with the relationship with WFP. According to the representative of FAO, cooperation among the three Rome-based agencies was outstanding. This was confirmed by the members of the humanitarian community attending the meeting, one of whom even stated that he had not seen such good collaboration among the Rome-based agencies in any other country. The sharing of facilities by WFP and FAO in Goma might be a factor facilitating good communication and steady contacts, in addition to obvious synergies and savings.

Partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations and the Private-Sector Operational Portfolio

20. WFP is working with various NGOs to reach needy people living in remote areas. Representatives of these NGOs spoke about their concern with the new role of MONUSCO and their fear that the humanitarian space could be at risk after the military intervention by the Intervention Brigade. For the local population, there is only one United Nations, and they see little difference between the black “UN” symbol used in military interventions and the blue “UN” symbol used in providing humanitarian assistance. This concern does not diminish their satisfaction and that of the population with the outcome of the last military action by the Intervention Brigade, which was hailed as an effective intervention that forced the M23 rebels out of Goma and re-established peace in the area. In Goma, M23 is perceived as an enemy.
21. During the meeting with the Goma humanitarian community, the participants shared their experiences and expressed many concerns. They noted the following:
- i) There are numerous cases of prostitution near camps and sites for IDPs, a result of extreme deprivation among the displaced population.
 - ii) Food assistance remains vital for IDPs and other vulnerable people in camps and sites, because they are not able to work or engage in agricultural activities to improve their incomes.
 - iii) The IDP population has increased significantly in North Kivu province as a result of armed violence and conflict in 2012 and 2013.
 - iv) A considerable number of recently displaced people have gathered at new sites. Although WFP assists a certain number of IDP spontaneous sites, it has a catalytic role jointly with UNHCR/IOM/OCHA to assess the feasibility of assisting all populations living in spontaneous sites according to their vulnerability, with the aim of: i) transforming the sites into officially recognized camps; ii) relocating these IDPs into adequately managed camps; or iii) finding other options to ensure livelihood reconstruction.
 - v) Conditions for return to areas of origin have not been created because of persistent insecurity. The operations of MONUSCO may provide opportunities to return, but this will not be immediate. WFP is working to ensure that vulnerable households, including IDPs living in host families, will be further considered.
 - vi) In view of the IDPs’ dependence on long-term food distribution, especially in the camps, more should be done to promote local integration and to create conditions

conducive to return in safety and dignity. The authorities should also ensure that IDPs have access to land and develop a strategy to create food security for IDPs.

- vii) The prevalence of sexual violence in areas of displacement is considerable. All possible measures should be taken to prevent it. The humanitarian response in camps and sites should be adapted to minimize the risks for women and girls.
- viii) The possibilities for wet-feeding programmes should be explored with a view to reducing the need for fuel and to minimize the movements of women to collect wood. The cultural opposition to wet feeding – fear of poisoning among women – should be addressed.
- ix) There could be opportunities for returns in 2014, following the deployment of the Intervention Brigade and its operations against armed groups. If the IDPs can return, it will be important to plan inter-sector support for them to ensure access to food for a transition period until they become autonomous and can gather harvests.

Operations of WFP

22. During the meeting with the WFP staff, some concerns were expressed. The DRC, the Republic of the Congo and Madagascar are the only French-speaking country offices covered by the Johannesburg regional bureau, which makes it necessary to have liaison officers with the right language skills. The staff made clear their recurrent difficulties in obtaining funding for the programmes at the right time; the implementation of planned activities is also difficult because of the changing situation in the country. The staff are highly committed to their work and would like to reach more needy people in a more effective way.
23. Staff stated that the situation in DRC is constantly developing, and that it may change from the time a programme is presented for approval to the time of implementation. In the process of approving programmes, logistics costs must be taken into consideration.
24. At the time of the visit by the Executive Board delegation, overall new funding stood at 13 percent of the planned amount for the protracted relief and recovery operation in 2013. If the overall needs for the 30-month lifetime of the operation are considered, the funding was 3 percent without the resource transfer from the previous project.
25. The almost total absence of functional roads and rail services makes it necessary that United Nations workers providing the assistance required by the needy population of DRC, travel to remote locations with UNHAS, which is administrated by WFP. A current UNHAS funding gap of US\$1.5 million will need to be closed.
26. At the present time, MONUSCO also offers some humanitarian air services with helicopters and aircraft. Its new mandate makes it even more necessary to separate humanitarian activities from the activities carried out by MONUSCO.

Logistics

27. WFP works with commercial transporters in many parts of the country. In many cases goods have to be moved by air because the road and rail networks are very underdeveloped.

Cash and Vouchers

28. WFP has become a major player in the introduction of this transfer modality, which is widely recognized and much sought after and appreciated by beneficiaries. Several international NGOs have been implementing different types of cash and voucher

interventions on behalf of WFP. There are clear indications of the positive impact of these interventions on the creation of local food markets, which work well whenever the security situation allows it. As a result of the insecurity in DRC, registered beneficiaries are constantly moving: WFP therefore plans to introduce electronic registration and distribution modalities to determine how the cash distributed is spent.

School Feeding Programme

29. The school feeding programme has been modified because of a lack of financing and of a regular food pipeline. As a result the children are getting only 60 percent of the ration, and the assisted population is being cut by 25 percent. WFP staff commented that they need six months to organize deliveries of food, and three months to distribute it. Regional procurement is not always possible because local food providers lack adequate food drying and processing facilities, which results in unreliable food quality and supply. Delivering food to remote locations makes the operations costly: this applies not only to school feeding, but to all operations involving food deliveries. According to information given by the Minister of Education and other governmental authorities, primary schooling in DRC is free. But children attending school have to pay for uniforms, books and a “motivation fee” for the teachers, so the charges can be as high as US\$300 per year for each child. This prevents a large number of children from attending school and benefiting from school feeding.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The “Islands of Peace”

30. On 28 March 2013, the Security Council adopted resolution 2098 and endorsed the new comprehensive approach advocated by the Secretary-General in addressing the recurring cycles of violence in eastern DRC, providing MONUSCO with a strengthened political and military mandate, including an Intervention Brigade. The actions of the Intervention Brigade aim to reduce the threat posed by armed groups to state authority and civilian security and to make space for stabilization activities, holding areas free of armed groups and mitigating risks to civilians. To fulfil its mandate, MONUSCO has developed an integrated “shape, clear, hold and build” concept of operations; coordination mechanisms between MONUSCO components and UNCT and humanitarian partners are being worked out to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to the Intervention Brigade operations.
31. The Islands of Peace concept aims to provide a framework for integrated action of the United Nations system in support of the Government of DRC in the “clear”, “hold” and “build” phases of the operation. Food distribution is an important element of those three phases.
32. The idea of creating “Islands of Peace” certainly deserves attention. Nevertheless, it must be analysed carefully because the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence shall not be threatened.

Internally Displaced Persons

33. The numbers and locations of IDPs are constantly changing. To identify the neediest and most vulnerable people it is necessary to improve collaboration with the Government of DRC.

34. The work of WFP is difficult because there is no adequate system for IDP registration: with this in mind, WFP's telecommunications and programming staff are seeking to create a joint registration system accessible to all humanitarian actors. WFP also works with its partners to integrate the rapid response mechanism set up by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and OCHA, with the food security cluster, into the *Réponse rapide aux mouvements de population* process.
35. Because there is a lack of government engagement in camp management and beneficiary registration, the authorities should be encouraged to take the lead in managing the IDP camps and sites and in developing exit strategies – including return – for the IDPs. Although the work of WFP is much appreciated, we observed the Government's tendency to withdraw from its responsibilities and pass them to the United Nations agencies. There is a strong need to create in the authorities a feeling of ownership for WFP's programmes, which we believe could be done through building capacity among government officials and employees.

Shipment of Humanitarian Consignments

36. In view of the recurrent difficulties of bringing food shipments into DRC – it can take six months for importation documents to be approved by the authorities – more should be done to purchase food in local markets. It would also be useful and positive if the Government could support the work of WFP by providing free warehousing in strategic places.

Infrastructure Development

37. Infrastructures in DRC are very underdeveloped, which impedes the work of WFP and other humanitarian agencies. An infrastructure creation plan could be worked out with the Government, perhaps as part of a major food/cash for work intervention.

Role of Government in Resettling Displaced Families

38. In cooperation with other United Nations agencies, WFP must appeal to the Government to create the conditions for the return of displaced families; where there is no possibility of this, the Government should intervene to enable long-term IDPs to create cooperatives and cultivate arable land in order to improve their nutrition and incomes, and to regain their dignity.

Access to Land

39. If sustainable peace is to be achieved, development activities must address the use and tenure of arable land. The UNCT should be encouraged to appeal to the Government to consider and be guided by the provisions of the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security Policies*, issued by the Committee on World Food Security.

Public Relations Drive to Build a Positive Image of the United Nations and Partners in DRC

40. In view of the fact that the population is hardly aware of the work being done by the United Nations in DRC, it would be appropriate to start a public relations drive in this regard. This could make the work of the humanitarian agencies easier and more secure, especially with the new mandate of MONUSCO.

Challenges of the School Feeding Programme

41. The DRC authorities stated that a policy of free education had been in place since 2010. The reality is that parents have to pay various fees, which can amount to US\$300 per child per year. This means that the school feeding offered by WFP does not reach the children of the poorest of the poor because they are not attending school. WFP and UNICEF should work with the Government to find alternative solutions.

Closer Collaboration of the United Nations Country Team with Government Structures at all Levels

42. The findings of the delegation indicate a good working relationship between the UNCT and the Government, but it is most evident in the capital. The UNCT indicated that there is a strong possibility of engaging the Government, at its request, in drawing up medium-term and long-term plans for the development of DRC.

ANNEX

**WFP Executive Board Field Visit
to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
8–16 September 2013**

PROGRAMME**Sunday, 8 September 2013**

PM	Arrival of Executive Board members and Board Secretary
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Monday, 9 September 2013

8:30–9:00	Briefing with Field Security Officer and collection of badges at UNDSS
9:30–11:00	Meetings with WFP Representative/Country Director (CD) and key operational staff (Programme, Logistics, UNHAS, etc.)
11:00–12:00	Delegation members meet with staff
14:00–15:00	Meetings with the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) Moustapha Soumaré
15:30	Meeting with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Martin Kobler/ DSRSG General Abdallah Wafi
16:30–17:00	Presentation of WFP operation in DRC (focal point: Ms Patrizia Papinutti, Head of Programme)

Tuesday, 10 September 2013

9:00–10:00	Meeting with the Minister of Education
10:00–11:00	Meeting with the Minister of Agriculture together with IFAD and FAO in the context of the <i>Groupe Thématique-9</i>
11:00–12:00	Meeting with the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs
13:00–14:00	Lunch meeting with Ms Alessandra Menegon, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross
14:30–16:00	Joint NGOs/cooperating partner meeting at WFP office

Wednesday, 11 September 2013: Field Visit to North Kivu, Goma

11:30	Arrival in Goma
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12:15–13:45	Briefing on WFP operations, including security, with Head of Area Office and heads of units
15:00–16:00	Meeting with the Governor of Goma
16:00–17:30	Meeting with the Goma humanitarian community (UN and NGOs)

Thursday, 12 September 2013: Field Visit to Kitchanga (ECHO helicopter)

8:30	Departure by helicopter for field visit to Kitchanga
9:00–12:00	Field visit to Kitchanga: observe general food distributions for IDPs, supplementary feeding for malnourished children and food-for-work activities – agricultural projects for IDP returnees and vulnerable host families
16:30–17:30	Meeting with MONUSCO Head of Office in North Kivu, Mr Ray Virgilio Torres

Friday, 13 September 2013

9:00–10:30	Field visit to Heal Africa hospital to see victims of sexual violence and children living with HIV/AIDS supported by WFP through food for training
10:40–11:30	Delegation meets with staff
17:00	Arrival in Kinshasa, preparation of de-briefings and reports
19:30	De-briefing with WFP CD and senior staff members

Saturday, 14 September 2013

9:00–10:30	Working breakfast with Kinshasa UNCT in UNICEF meeting room
11:00–12:30	De-briefing with main government counterparts (technical level) at WFP office
14:00	Report writing, visits to Kinshasa markets and art galleries

Sunday, 15 September 2013

20:40	Departure for Rome
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Monday, 16 September 2013

10:00	Landing at Fiumicino airport
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ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CD	country director
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
IDP	internally displaced person
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund