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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 2008

In accordance with the methods of work of the Executive Board, the present document reflects the main points of its deliberations to be taken into account by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Board's decisions and recommendations, contained in the document WFP/EB.2/2008/15.

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CURRENT AND FUTURE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Opening Remarks by the Executive Director (2008/EB.2/1)

1. The Executive Director opened her remarks by referring to the challenges facing WFP as a result of the global financial crisis: the number of hungry and malnourished people was increasing as food and fuel costs escalated. WFP had to maintain its focus on those most in need and manage the volatility caused by the crisis. It had already responded by improving its alignment with national strategies, improving policy and programme guidance, and developing even greater coherence and better partnerships in and beyond the United Nations. Several innovative developments were showing results: Purchase for Progress was ensuring that local poor farmers were part of the solution to hunger, and new nutritious and ready-to-eat food products were being produced and used in developing countries throughout the world.
2. The Executive Director thanked donors for their extraordinary support and for their participation in the consultations on the update to the Management Plan. The Secretariat was ready to respond to members' concerns with regard to managing spending and growth, assessing risks and maintaining the flexibility needed to be able to adjust to the evolving world situation, and would provide regular updates in that regard. She briefed the Board on the process to fill vacant Assistant Secretary-General posts.
3. Staff safety and security were major preoccupations: several more staff had lost their lives as a result of violence in recent months, threats to staff and transporters had often led to delays and cuts in rations, and piracy had constrained seaborne deliveries of food aid to the Horn of Africa. The Executive Director expressed appreciation to governments and the North American Treaty Organization for their willingness to provide escorts. She had been asked to chair the High-Level Committee on Management for the United Nations; one of its urgent tasks would be to elaborate a new security framework for the United Nations.
4. The Board was unanimous in its appreciation for the work of WFP in particularly challenging circumstances and in its condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives. Staff security and safety were of foremost concern, and support was expressed for more centralized United Nations work on security. Several Board members called on governments to uphold the principle of unhindered access by humanitarian workers.
5. With regard to the current financial crisis, it was vital that WFP continue to exploit its comparative advantages, in particular its unparalleled field presence and experience. Coherence and cooperation among United Nations agencies were fundamental in helping to lead global responses to the hunger issue; some Board members emphasized that innovative approaches under enhanced multilateral and bilateral international partnerships were needed to address the issues. WFP should look to strategic partnerships to pool expertise, technologies, funds and staff: WFP's work with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the REACH ending child hunger and undernutrition partnership were cited as examples of what could be achieved.
6. Several Board members urged WFP to continue to focus its priorities, supporting its work with enhanced technologies and programme procedures to maximize effectiveness, and adapting its operational practices to regional conditions, including through increased local food purchase. Noting the need to establish some funding predictability, it was suggested that a permanent mechanism for funding humanitarian work be considered, and the Board encouraged WFP to develop innovative funding modalities. However, it was



thought that the advantage of remaining a voluntarily funded agency was that it required WFP to maintain optimum efficiency in the use of resources.

7. With regard to the Management Plan, caution was needed along with flexibility to respond to evolving situations. Board members renewed their support for the Strategic Objectives and expressed appreciation for the transparency permitted by the informal consultations on a number of issues. Several Board members emphasized the importance of advocacy to keep hunger issues on the international agenda, even at a time of financial constraints, and applauded the Executive Director's leadership in that regard. The issues of geographical and gender representation among WFP senior staff were raised by several Board members; the Board as a whole looked forward to the new WFP gender policy currently being developed by the Secretariat. Some Board members urged WFP to exercise caution with regard to genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
8. In response, the Executive Director thanked the Board for its support and its focus on practical issues for addressing hunger. WFP was working to optimize its staffing, placing them for maximum value and reinforcing a learning culture; she noted both the new gender policy and work done by WFP to empower poor women. The Executive Director welcomed the Board's suggestion of a forward financing facility so that it could purchase food at the best prices and pre-position food for rapid responses. She agreed that the issue of central funding for staff security had to be addressed, and extended her own and the Board's appreciation for the work of WFP staff around the world.

POLICY ISSUES

WFP Evaluation Policy (2008/EB.2/2)

9. The Secretariat presented the policy, which had been elaborated further to a recommendation of the Peer Review of the Evaluation Function submitted to the Board at its First Regular Session in 2008; it brought together and updated evaluation aspects that previously had been covered in different documents. It had been based on World Bank standards for independent, impartial and useful evaluation to promote accountability and learning. Following approval of the policy, the Secretariat would develop a medium-term evaluation strategy for the coming five to six years.
10. The Board welcomed the policy, recognizing its commitment to United Nations best practices and its utility for governance. However, Board members emphasized several issues and requested clarification of others: the role and membership of the panel for appointing the Director of the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) and extending or terminating her/his contract; the policy for recruiting 50 percent of Office of Evaluation staff from within WFP and 50 percent from outside; the lack of a secure budget for evaluation; the criteria for selecting consultants; mechanisms and guidelines for ensuring that decentralized evaluations were as independent and impartial as those carried out by OEDE; the need to use the evaluations of countries and other partners as much as possible to reduce costs; the value of using a qualitative approach based on stakeholder reviews and consultations with beneficiaries; and the need to extend the focus of evaluations from how WFP was performing to whether it was doing the right thing. Board members also requested more frequent informal consultations for discussing evaluation findings, and suggested that the possibility of establishing a Board evaluation committee be explored for more formal reviews.



11. The Secretariat confirmed that the Director of OEDE made staffing decisions. Additional informal consultations to review evaluations would be held on request. There was no United Nations standard formula for setting secure evaluation budgets; establishing one was a challenge. The evaluation strategy would include building country office capacity for decentralized evaluations through on-the-job training with OEDE back-up and control. An Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) applied quality control to evaluations by OEDE and decentralized evaluations. Consultants were recruited from a roster, or via advertisement for evaluations that required special expertise. Decentralized evaluations were being standardized so that they could contribute to WFP-wide learning. Beneficiaries' views were collected during consultations in the field, but although OEDE would have liked to introduce more participatory evaluation techniques, these had proved too costly.

Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (2008/EB.2/3)

12. Introducing the document, the Secretariat stressed that the voucher and cash transfer proposals were part of WFP's move towards more flexible tools for addressing hunger issues: they could be used as complements or alternatives to existing food assistance modalities. It was noted that vouchers and cash transfers would be used only under appropriate circumstances, and based on context-specific assessments. An essential feature was partnership with governments as major actors in cash and safety-net interventions. New accounting procedures would be needed to manage the programmes, and planning would take into account issues of transparency, cost, safety, risk, gender and the effects on markets. An important outcome of cash and voucher programmes would be empowerment of beneficiaries. WFP would draw on its experience with cash and voucher programmes in scaling up pilot schemes, when appropriate and feasible, and developing guidance materials. Devising ways to meet the many challenges of such programmes would be part of the WFP learning culture.
13. The Board noted that the policy paper laid out the opportunities and limitations in a balanced way. Members agreed that the use of cash and voucher systems would help to maximize the effects of food interventions and help markets and farmers, and that they reflected the general move towards context-based operations; but they cautioned that WFP should proceed with care, given the risks and the need to ensure that such systems complemented national programmes. Several Board members stressed the need to develop partnerships with governments and others: criteria for partner selection would have to be developed.
14. Board members also emphasized that cash and voucher tools were likely to be most effective in transition and development situations and where markets were functional, but could be used in some emergencies, should there be appropriate implementation conditions. Communities should be involved in programmes to ensure that their needs were addressed and that interventions were sensitive to cultural and gender issues. Some members cautioned that providing food to address hunger was WFP's main concern and reiterated that cash and voucher programmes should be designed to serve food assistance purposes only; combinations of transfers could be particularly effective to pursue such objectives. Ways would have to be found to ensure that cash and vouchers were used as intended, and several Board members urged the development of robust systems to provide protection against fraud and corruption and to ensure in-depth monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Capacity-building was identified as a major issue: WFP would need to develop its own skills base, possibly combining deployment of specialist staff and training for field



staff, and it would need to support capacity development among government and other partners. Sound market analysis would be essential, and specialist training in this area would have to be provided. Some Board members raised questions addressing issues such as security, scaling up, training, private-sector involvement and criteria for partner selection.

15. The Secretariat was grateful for the Board's inputs, and recognized the importance it placed on strong partnerships, context specificity, improved understanding of markets, accurate needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation, capacity-building, and involvement of beneficiaries and communities. Training would be provided for WFP staff. The Secretariat stressed that it saw the proposed tools mostly as complements to WFP's food interventions, rather than alternatives. WFP was helping governments to design context-specific social protection and safety-net systems.

Preparing for Tomorrow Today: WFP Strategy for Managing and Developing Human Resources (2008–2011) (2008/EB.2/4)

16. The Secretariat presented the human resources strategy, which focused on the areas of responsiveness, capacity development and fostering partnerships. The Secretariat drew the Board's attention to changes made to the document in response to Board comments at the informal consultation, including an updated annex of staffing figures, reference to WFP's operating environment and identification of technical capacity requirements. The strategy had been discussed with representatives from other United Nations agencies, particularly during early consultative workshops, and had been endorsed by the Executive Policy Council.
17. Addressing key questions raised by members during the informal consultation, the Secretariat informed the Board that the proportion of longer-term contracts for international professional staff had been reduced in recent years and was currently at 51 percent, with newly recruited staff receiving fixed-term contracts. Consultancy contracts and inter-agency loans and secondments were used to supplement the workforce on a short-term basis.
18. During discussion of the document, several Board members suggested that WFP foster partnerships with donors, implementing partners and national governments, including building the capacities of potential partners. The Board was concerned that WFP lagged behind the United Nations goals for gender and geographic distribution in the international professional workforce, especially at senior levels. Members recognized that a lack of resources from developing countries for a junior professional officer scheme contributed to the lower percentage of developing country nationals within the WFP workforce, and that there was a need to identify other ways of recruiting young professionals from those countries. A comment was made regarding the possibility of replacing some international staff at hardship duty stations with nationally recruited staff. Several Board members requested a mapping of WFP staff, showing numbers and percentages of staff in each functional area, geographic location and staff category; some members underlined that merit must continue to be the main driver in decisions related to recruitment and development.
19. In response to Board questions and comments, the Secretariat emphasized that it was moving toward more open recruitment procedures and seeking out candidates from developing countries. Mention was made of WFP's progress in increasing the number of women managers, especially the increase in women deputy country directors from 17 percent in 2001 to 41 percent in 2008. Many areas included in the document were



regularly discussed by the United Nations Human Resources Network. Management training was being designed to include gender awareness; capacity-building priorities included nutrition, vulnerability assessment and market analysis. Mapping of international and national staff would be facilitated by the launching of WFP Information Network and Global System II (WINGS II) in early 2009; regular updates on staffing would be provided to the Board, as requested. The Secretariat undertook to review and revise as needed the results matrix included in the document and to provide a timeline for implementation of the activities identified.

Global Challenge, National Response: WFP's Support to National AIDS Programmes – Annual Update on WFP's Response to HIV and AIDS (2008/EB.2/5)

20. The Secretariat outlined the global challenge of AIDS and WFP's work in providing nutritional support and food assistance for people living with HIV/AIDS, including those receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). Gains had been made in this area, but much remained to be done, and WFP was strengthening its nutrition staff, building partnerships, and developing and rolling out training, guidance and an M&E toolkit. Although providing food increased adherence to and the effectiveness of ART, food and nutrition components for people infected with HIV were underfunded. In 2009, WFP would concentrate on developing a policy, strategy and government advocacy on nutrition and HIV and AIDS. WFP's main partners in the area of HIV/AIDS include the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). A representative of UNAIDS outlined WFP's valuable cooperation with her organization.
21. In its discussion, the Board noted that many AIDS programmes lacked components focusing on the special needs of women and children, and that more should be done with raising awareness of HIV and AIDS among young people. A database of WFP's programmes showing what was being done where would be very useful. It was important to ensure that nutritional support pipelines were in place to reach people before they became undernourished.
22. The Secretariat welcomed the Board comments and emphasized the importance of partnerships and adapting responses to local conditions.

Progress Report on Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition (2008/EB.2/6)

23. The document was presented by the Secretariat and the REACH coordinator, with representatives of the FAO, WHO and the World Bank attending the session. Expressing appreciation for the opportunity to discuss the report with the Board, the Secretariat announced that the heads of WFP, UNICEF, FAO and WHO had recently signed a joint letter to their offices worldwide expressing their commitment to working together to address child hunger and undernutrition. The REACH initiative was an inter-agency partnership based on country ownership of interventions and hence did not require a new international structure. It was action-oriented and based on experience; it aimed to increase national capacities to address child hunger and to support advocacy. The initiative would be supported by shared financial and in-kind contributions from the partners and aimed for maximum transparency and accountability. It would work by raising the profile of nutrition in national agendas, supporting governments in developing coherent action plans based on proven interventions and promoting new research. Assessment indicators and guidance



materials were being developed, and professional facilitators had been appointed to support United Nations country teams in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mauritania. The current priority was to develop the necessary partnerships with public and private-sector bodies such as The Boston Consulting Group – already a major partner – and to scale up the work and expand to additional countries, using the skills available in the participating entities.

24. The Board expressed its strong support for the initiative, and particularly appreciated the country-level approach, its inter-agency nature and its holistic focus on prevention as well as response. WFP was commended for its leadership and the inter-agency team for turning the initiative into an action-oriented, specific programme of support. Some members urged the REACH team to continue setting up partnerships with a wide range of actors, to identify and use best practices and to develop holistic approaches, addressing nutrition issues through families, communities and agricultural interventions; evidence-based assessments of pilot projects would be an essential part of this. Board members expressed approval of the fact that REACH would be integrated into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and that it was a highly practical approach to addressing undernutrition.
25. The REACH representatives thanked the Board for its support, which would give added impetus to the work that remained to be done, particularly on refining the proposed funding mechanisms and supply systems. The team would soon develop a business model for engagement with the private sector, and would be approaching other potential donors. Pilot projects were to be expanded to test REACH processes.

RESOURCE, FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Update on the WFP Management Plan (2008–2009) (2008/EB.2/7)

26. The Executive Director made a brief statement outlining the circumstances in which the Management Plan had been updated. While originally expected to be an adjustment to the demands of the new Strategic Plan, the update also presented a dramatic increase in WFP's workload. The scale-up in operations had resulted in a need to increase staff capacity in the field and had also increased the demand for Headquarters and regional bureaux support to country offices. The Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) budget being presented for approval in the update aimed to halt the further reduction in posts originally planned for 2009 and to provide some additional staff resources in select areas. The Executive Director thanked Board members for their commitment to the process of informal consultations on the Management Plan, and suggested that given the current concerns about the global financial crisis, and the great uncertainty faced by WFP, a paragraph be added to the draft decision reflecting the need for continued assessment of the budget level and priorities, and continued informal consultations with the Board.
27. The Secretariat outlined the progress made in the four informal consultations on the update held with Board membership in 2008, recalling the different PSA levels discussed and emphasizing that the proposed PSA level was based on a conservative income forecast and would rebuild reserves in the PSA Equalization Account. The Programme of Work had increased by 97 percent over the last year, but the PSA proposal undertook only to stop further reductions in PSA posts, and introduced a modest increase in selected areas. Income received in the first ten months of the biennium was sufficient to cover 64 percent of the total proposed PSA expenditure for the entire biennium. The Secretariat recalled that



WFP would be reviewing its financial framework; however, work on the budget for the next biennium would have to begin under the current arrangements. Under the current framework WFP needed to be uniquely flexible in managing contractions and expansions in support capacity, in line with decreases or increases in the Programme of Work.

28. The Board expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Secretariat on adjusting the Management Plan, including adapting it to the demands of the new Strategic Plan, and for the Secretariat's responses to Board concerns. However, concerns were raised regarding the Programme of Work, the administrative budget level and expenditure prioritization. Members encouraged the Secretariat to anticipate and manage risks by closely matching expenditure to realistic budget means. Board members acknowledged the difficulty of budgeting in a context of global uncertainty, and stressed that forecasting should take this into account and match resources to needs as closely as possible; the need for robust funding was essential in view of the impending global recession. Board members urged WFP to do its utmost to obtain sound information on which to base its financial decisions and pledged support in this process. Board members urged WFP to ensure that resources, both financial and human, were aligned with key operational priorities. Several Board members emphasized that WFP's main comparative advantage was in providing food assistance in emergencies; others emphasized that all of the Strategic Objectives contributed to combating hunger. Several members questioned the basis for the priorities reflected in reinstated posts; more broadly reference was made repeatedly to recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the FAO Finance Committee concerning the level of information on which proposals were based. Some members requested expanded trend analysis for post numbers encompassing all staff regardless of the funding source in order to have a full picture.
29. The Secretariat thanked the Board for its support and the constructive dialogue, and gave assurances that it would continue to monitor closely expenditures and income levels, emphasizing the need for sustainability and risk management. The Secretariat undertook to continue consultations with the Board. The question of offshoring was due for review in the coming biennium, with new developments such as the proposed United Nations common services centres kept in mind; the aim was to approach all such issues in a holistic manner. The policy on investments was constantly reviewed and updated: for example, WFP had recently shifted to investments with lower but safer returns, with a view to protecting capital.
30. A consensus on the decision was reached after extensive discussions. In light of global uncertainties, which had a direct impact on WFP's Programme of Work and budget, and the concerns expressed by the ACABQ, the FAO Finance Committee and Board members, the Board requested that the Management Plan be reviewed at the February and June sessions, in 2009, and that further rationale for priorities and posts be provided. One Board member reiterated concern about priorities in and justifications for the PSA budget, in particular with regard to the increase of posts at Headquarters versus regional and country offices. This member further requested that the Board re-establish a platform for discussing the direction of WFP and for performing oversight and accountability functions.
31. In conclusion, the Executive Director announced plans to create a forum for more strategic discussions with the Board on WFP's approach, capacity and partnerships, particularly in the areas of early warning, vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and emergency needs analysis; and would hold further discussions on the distribution of resources between Headquarters and the field. She was grateful for the efforts of staff who were working at full stretch not only to perform their regular duties but also to respond to



increased demands. She expressed her appreciation for the Board's commitment and support to WFP, and for the efforts of many governments in addressing national hunger issues.

Managing for Results: A Second Review of Progress in Implementing Results-Based Management – Report by the External Auditor (2008/EB.2/8)

32. The External Auditor presented his report, drawing attention to the difficulties WFP faced in measuring performance against its Strategic Objectives, monitoring project performance in terms of outcomes, and building on lessons learned and good practices. The audit had found a loss of momentum in WFP's implementation of results-based management (RBM) in the field, but noted the Secretariat's commitment to implementing the External Auditor's recommendations. There was particular scope for improvement in updating objectives, outcomes, outputs and indicators; improving output and outcome measurement; reinforcing senior management's commitment to RBM; and increasing incentives for staff to complete Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) assessments.
33. The Secretariat welcomed the report and its recommendations, while stating its intention to keep Standardized Project Reports separate from Annual Performance Reports, and to continue to follow United Nations policy regarding staff rewards and incentives.
34. Many Board members underlined the importance they placed on RBM for improved accountability and governance, and the need for WFP to address the External Auditor's recommendations within the deadlines. Several Board members requested that the Secretariat develop management objectives to assess organizational results and ensure accountability for results. Many members indicated that outcome monitoring and reporting needed to be improved. WFP would have to ensure that lessons and best practices were shared internally and with other agencies; and that staff were provided with incentives, capacity-building and support for the extra work involved. The large number of actions WFP planned to take by the end of 2009 would require prioritization.
35. Responding to the Board, the External Auditor described how individual staff performance and objectives were aligned with WFP's strategic and management objectives. He suggested that the Board consider the role it would like to play in moving RBM implementation forward at WFP, and agreed with the concern of some Board members about the disbandment of the RBM Division. Although the External Auditor's findings and recommendations were independent, the factual content of the report had been agreed with the Secretariat.
36. The Secretariat reported that a new dedicated RBM Unit had recently been established in the Office of the Executive Director; WFP's sets of RBM tools made it a leader in developing a United Nations system-wide RBM process. WFP was developing systems for sharing information and improving monitoring of the follow-up on evaluation recommendations. The use of WINGS II beginning in 2009 would facilitate performance measurement. Gathering information for monitoring and outcome measurement from the field was sometimes challenging, so WFP was strengthening the capacities of country offices to do so. The Secretariat would take note of the findings of the report on RBM of the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to the United Nations General Assembly.



EVALUATION REPORTS

Summary Report of the Thematic Evaluation of WFP's HIV and AIDS Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa (2008/EB.2/9)

37. The Director of OEDE presented the summary report, expressing appreciation for the financial support provided for the evaluation by Switzerland. The evaluation had addressed the quality of WFP's HIV and AIDS policies, the quality of the implementation of interventions and the adequacy of the resources allocated. It had identified the need to keep policies up to date in changing circumstances and to ensure that it was fully understood and supported by staff at the country office and field levels. The evaluation had also emphasized the importance of ensuring that interventions were in line with national strategies, especially in relation to nutrition. There was a need to look at targeting given the fact that there was a higher concentration of people affected by HIV in urban areas, while WFP was accustomed to operating in rural areas. Work on mainstreaming HIV and AIDS interventions had been variable, and greater consistency in determining rations was called for. WFP's capacities had been limited in areas where there the HIV and AIDS unit had been discontinued. A review of the HIV and AIDS policy was recommended.
38. In introducing the management response to the evaluation, the Secretariat stressed the independent nature of the evaluation and undertook to apply the various recommendations and report back to the Board.
39. The Board appreciated the frankness of the evaluation, noting in particular the need for consistent application of WFP policy in all interventions and offices. The need to ensure that all staff understood and supported WFP's HIV and AIDS policies was also underlined: improved communication strategies would help to address this need. The impact of HIV and AIDS on development was noted, and Board members urged WFP to ensure that its targeting was of the highest possible quality and to put adequate resources in place so that the right beneficiaries were reached. Board members stressed the importance of working holistically and in partnership with governments and other specialist organizations such as United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief (PEPFAR) and UNAIDS in addressing HIV and AIDS; many governments were unable to cope without support. They also noted: the need for further research and knowledge sharing; the need to develop robust M&E systems to ensure that interventions retained optimum effectiveness; and the importance of reviewing HIV and AIDS policy to keep it in line with changing needs, and of ensuring that indicators and results frameworks were kept up to date. Some Board members noted that M&E systems should include mechanisms to prevent fraud and abuse. It was important to train staff and at the same time avoid overloading country offices, so clear priorities had to be established. Several members reiterated the need to keep HIV, AIDS and nutrition high on national agendas.
40. The Secretariat expressed appreciation of the Board's commitment and support, and would take action on the recommendations before reporting back to the Board. The strategic results framework and the results-based management framework would be reviewed and amended as necessary. WFP would seek to increase the resources assigned to interventions related to HIV and AIDS, and a system of priorities would be devised so that the large amount of work required could be carried out. The Secretariat assured the Board that WFP would work in partnerships to optimize the effectiveness of holistic approaches to nutrition in relation to HIV and AIDS.



Summary Report of the End-of-Term Evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security (2008/EB.2/10)

41. The Director of OEDE presented the summary of the evaluation, which built on other evaluation work done by WFP and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). At its launch in 2003, the WFP Enhanced Commitments to Women Policy had been praised for its pragmatism and innovation in tackling gender issues and bridging the gap between the concepts of women in development and gender. OEDE had found the gender policy to be the best supported of the policies it had evaluated; it had taken gender issues forward, making it clear to staff and others that gender was important to WFP. There were some weaknesses, however, including a lack of flexibility in the field, which sometimes limited staff's creativity in responding to local contexts; lack of clarity as to whether the main objective was to promote women's food security or their empowerment; and weak outcome monitoring, which failed to examine how women were really affected by policies and activities intended to benefit them. Three recommendations had been made, and the Secretariat had drawn up a response and schedule for implementing these.
42. The Board commended the progress made, but expressed concern about shortcomings, including in i) disseminating the policy to country offices; ii) increasing women's presence at Headquarters; iii) defining the role of regional bureaux; and iv) appointing more senior staff as gender focal points. Of particular concern were an apparent drop in momentum for mainstreaming the gender policy and the reduced numbers of women in senior positions. Board members recommended that the new policy: i) broaden its focus to give women more control over land, farming programmes and policies, as well as food distribution; ii) use local human resources with experience and knowledge of local gender issues; iii) concentrate on women as actors rather than beneficiaries; iv) increase proportion of women staff numbers; v) develop responses to domestic violence against women; vi) identify measurable outcomes; and vii) encourage men to take more active roles in relation to their families and children.
43. The Secretariat welcomed the Board's suggestions and undertook to provide regular updates on progress. The new gender policy would be presented at the Board's First Regular Session in 2009. Capacity-building in gender would be a corporate priority, and country directors would be supported to develop and implement gender-specific actions based on their local contexts. Gender staff at Headquarters would remain lean, with more resources allocated to country offices to support successful gender mainstreaming. WFP would build on its deep field presence and national staff to identify and implement culturally sensitive interventions to address gender inequalities within the context of WFP operations. Funding would be made available to country offices that would include a grant facility to encourage innovations in the field.
44. WFP would seek to make accountability for the successful implementation of the gender policy an institution-wide issue, rather than one for only gender focal points and the Headquarters gender unit; this would require gender training at all levels and in all areas of WFP. Emphasis would be placed on measuring outcomes and impact. Ways of reducing violence against beneficiaries – especially women and girls – would be included in the new policy.



REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS – ASIA; MIDDLE EAST, CENTRAL ASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE; LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

45. The Regional Director for Asia (OMB) noted that decreased trade, insecurity, falling levels of remittances and declining tourism were having negative effects in the region. In India, rising inflation continued to affect people's access to food. In Nepal, WFP and FAO were chairing a task force to address high food prices, supported by the World Bank. In Afghanistan, WFP and its partners were providing food and fortified flour, inputs for health and agricultural development, and cash and food vouchers for the needy; but insurgency made deliveries of assistance a high-risk process. Outflows of wheat from the tribal areas of Pakistan, increasing conflict and refugee movements were complicating the food situation there; WFP was reaching 40 percent of targeted beneficiaries, but inflation was constraining government plans for wheat imports. In Bangladesh WFP planned to provide ready-to-eat food for schoolchildren and food-for-work opportunities through the new emergency operation (EMOP). In the Philippines, WFP was working with the Government on responding to the problems in Mindanao, including through micronutrient programmes. In northern Sri Lanka, large numbers of people were dependent on WFP food, but access to them was constrained, and 90 percent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) lived below the poverty line. An assessment in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) indicated a potential food emergency in parts of the country; funding shortfalls meant that rations would have to be cut. WFP assistance in Myanmar would continue until November 2009: a WFP/FAO assessment was underway to help establish beneficiary numbers. WFP's work in the region had increased enormously; more realistic training in emergency preparedness would enable WFP and other emergency actors to respond more effectively to future shocks.
46. The Regional Director for the Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe (OMC) drew attention to recent flooding in Yemen, where WFP was coordinating its response with the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Iraq, there were still 665,000 IDPs, and the Government needed support in improving the public distribution system. There were still 2.3 million Iraqi refugees in the region, mainly in Syria, where WFP was helping the most vulnerable and considering a voucher system to allow them to use Syrian markets. In the Caucasus, WFP was providing emergency food for 130,000 IDPs; more funding was required. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where poverty was increasing and a large percentage of incomes was being spent on food, many people were dependent on food assistance. WFP was working with partners to ensure access for aid shipments; pressures on land, food and water, high food prices, and losses of livelihoods and assets combined to create an extremely volatile situation. Food voucher programmes were starting in Georgia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tajikistan; WFP was working with governments on national food-security strategies and safety nets, but national budgets were under strain. Capacity-building was ongoing in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria; private-sector partnerships were being expanded and innovations promoted with a view to ensuring sustainability in all programmes.
47. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean (OMP) noted that a recent assessment showed 26 million people in danger of falling into poverty, setting back progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). High food prices meant that people were not accessing sufficient food, and safety nets were inadequate to cope with the coming recession. WFP was supporting governments in hunger-reduction strategies and food assistance programmes, for example using VAM to enhance targeting and providing capacity-development. Reduced remittances would particularly affect Central American



countries, which was a concern given the correlation between nutrition and levels of remittances. Hurricanes and flooding had had serious effects in Haiti, where WFP had increased its assistance by 1 million rations. The Regional Director expressed particular concern for the vulnerability of women and girls, for whom safety nets would be essential. WFP urgently required more donations to support its programmes, which currently covered only 44 percent of needs.

48. Board members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to hear about several regions simultaneously. There was a request that in future Board sessions, the Secretariat provide full accounts of government actions in relation to WFP's work. Several members suggested that WFP should maximize its use of the considerable expertise available in many countries in the OMC region. Attention was drawn to the serious nature of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the need to facilitate the movement of international aid. With regard to the new Strategic Objectives, Board members asked what adjustments would be required to ensure that they were achieved.
49. Responding to Board questions and observations, the Regional Director for Asia noted that the DPRK EMOP had started on 1 September at the Government's request, assisting 6.2 million beneficiaries until November 2009. WFP could make monitoring visits without difficulty, but low funding for the operation meant there was a risk that the Government would reduce access. Special training was needed to prepare staff for sudden-onset disasters: high-tech simulations would be an inexpensive and effective approach. The requirements for implementing the Strategic Objectives was a country-level issue, but in general greater capacity in assessment, programme design and analysis were necessary.
50. The OMC Regional Director described WFP's excellent relations with governments and the media; the country office was working to promote and use local capacities, in particular by temporarily deploying experienced people to offices where their skills were required. He reiterated WFP's commitment to maintaining assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where 665,000 beneficiaries were being supported in operations that were well funded.
51. The OMP Regional Director informed the Board that an EMOP in Cuba was under way. With regard to implementing the Strategic Objectives, needs varied in different countries: WFP was working with governments on prevention, rehabilitation and social-protection programmes, especially those based on nutrition. He emphasized that the reduction in employment opportunities in other countries would create an urgent need for social protection systems such as the "Mothers and Children First" programme.

ASIA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Sri Lanka 10756.0 (2008/EB.2/11)

52. After outlining WFP's immediate response to the earthquake that had affected Pakistan the day before, which would require an EMOP for 20,000 people, the Regional Director for Asia presented the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) for Sri Lanka. During development of the PRRO, conflict had intensified in northern Sri Lanka and many internally displaced persons (IDPs) were being forced to relocate repeatedly as the front line moved. Most IDPs lacked livelihood resources and were often fully dependent on food aid for their survival; 40 percent of children under 5 were underweight, 31 percent stunted and 28 percent suffered from wasting. The PRRO was based on findings of several assessments carried out in Sri Lanka over the past year and a half; it aimed to reduce



hunger, strengthen livelihoods and build national capacity, and was in line with Strategic Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5. The Government's involvement in and contribution to the PRRO were strong. A WFP-led special operation from September 2006 to December 2008 had been valuable in enhancing emergency preparedness and response through food storage facilities, allowing for pre-positioning and improving security conditions for WFP and other United Nations staff.

53. The Board commended the in-country consultation process carried out to draw up the PRRO, which had helped create government ownership; its well-planned exit strategy; and its food distributions to vulnerable people living outside but close to target areas. It encouraged WFP to increase local purchasing and local responses to food insecurity as quickly as possible. Access difficulties were a great concern, particularly in hampering monitoring; Board members emphasized the importance of ensuring that food reached all the people who needed it.
54. The Secretariat thanked the Board for its support. It recognized that monitoring was an issue, and had agreements with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and local NGOs to carry out monitoring in areas WFP could not reach. However, the priority was to get food to those who needed it, even when monitoring was impossible. WFP should transfer the risks away from the beneficiaries, through continued food deliveries in adverse circumstances. The very difficult situation in the north was likely to change over the course of the PRRO.

REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS — AFRICA

55. All three Regional Directors for Africa reported that food price rises were exacerbating existing vulnerability, food insecurity and poverty and forcing people into unsustainable coping strategies such as selling assets, removing children from school and reducing the number of meals eaten. WFP's newly established Emerging Market Mitigation Account (EMMA) was providing additional assistance in some countries. Although prices were stabilizing, at the end of 2008 they were still significantly higher than in 2007. The degradation of livelihoods was likely to have lasting effects on the most vulnerable, requiring medium- and long-term responses from WFP and its partners.
56. The Regional Director for Southern, Eastern and Central Africa reported that EMMA funds were providing assistance to 150,000 beneficiaries in Djibouti, 160,000 in Uganda and 160,000 in Mozambique. In the Horn of Africa, 17.5 million people needed assistance to cope with the effects of high food prices, drought and insecurity. WFP's total funding shortfall for the subregion was US\$572 million; rations had been cut by a third in some areas, particularly for pastoralists. With the help of European navies, WFP had shipped 137 mt of food into Somalia, in spite of piracy. Security issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were limiting WFP's access to IDPs in some areas; pipeline breaks were looming and more than 9 mt was required up to April 2009. In Zimbabwe, the government suspension of NGO activities had been lifted in August 2008, but inflation of up to 231 million percent was hampering humanitarian activities, including those of WFP. A potential pipeline break in January 2009 could result in famine; the operation urgently required US\$140 million to April 2009.
57. The Regional Director for the Sudan cited 2009 as being a critical year, with the upcoming elections, the outcome of the International Criminal Court's decision to indict the President, and the new Darfur peace initiative. Darfur was in security phase 4 and the rest of the country in phase 3. In Darfur, IDP numbers increased by 280,000 during 2008 and fighting had prevented WFP from reaching 250,000 beneficiaries in September;



hijacking incidents had affected more than 100 trucks. WFP had cut rations beginning in May and by October was distributing only 65 percent of the planned rations, as insecurity continued to adversely affect food deliveries. More than 2 million people were reported to have returned to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement but remained vulnerable due to lack of basic services and livelihoods; WFP's interventions therefore had to alternate between relief and recovery. In Southern Sudan, WFP was planning a pilot project under the P4P initiative whereby in 2009 food would be purchased from small local farmers for school feeding activities. For 2009, WFP requirements were US\$921 million; early pledging was much appreciated as 65 percent of the requirement needed to be in place by the beginning of the year. During 2008, WFP had provided air services for the humanitarian community, flying on average 14,000 passengers a month to 188 locations, but the operation, with a fleet of 23 aircrafts, suffered major funding shortfalls. In 2009, the humanitarian air service would require US\$89 million to continue its services.

58. The Regional Director for West Africa spoke about how reduced purchasing power resulting from food price rises and bad harvests had exacerbated the effects of scarce resources, harsh climates and a lack of safety nets. The West Africa region had a long history of structural food insecurity with several extremely low social indicators; of the 177 countries ranked in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index, seven of the bottom ten countries were in OMD; disasters and conflict continued to be underlying causes. The number of WFP beneficiaries had increased by 4 million above the programmed 10 million; assisting them would require an additional 129,000 mt of food costing US\$170 million. The 2008 harvest appeared good, but high rice prices, the drop in value of the Central African franc (CFA) against the US dollar, and floods in Chad, Ghana, Niger and Togo were added challenges. Although post-harvest grain prices on the major regional markets were falling, they were significantly higher than a year ago. Higher international prices and the good 2008 harvest provided WFP an opportunity to make more cost-effective local purchase, thereby encouraging increased local production. The regional bureau would continue to work with governments to improve social safety nets for an increasing number of vulnerable groups including non-food producers and net food buyers. To link preparedness with early response capacity, as part of WFP's cluster lead in logistics, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had partnered with WFP in the implementation of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Accra.
59. During its discussion, Board members thanked WFP for its interventions in Africa and several reported their countries' intention to support WFP activities there. Responding to the concerns of some Board members, the Regional Directors emphasized that governments in all three regions were very willing to take responsibility for responding to their countries' needs, but often lacked the necessary resources and capacity, particularly when faced by repeated and severe emergencies. Many national governments were already implementing their own projects and programmes, as well as advising WFP, and providing food for distribution, funds for assessments, and escorts for WFP convoys in insecure areas.



SOUTHERN, EASTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO

Country Programme Kenya 10668.0 (2009–2013) (2008/EB.2/12)

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Burundi 10528.1 (2008/EB.2/13)

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Ethiopia 10127.3 (2008/EB.2/14)

60. The Regional Director for Southern, Eastern and Central Africa presented the two PRROs, which were both results-oriented and in line with WFP Strategic Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4. The Burundi PRRO focused on support for stabilization and recovery in the country's post-conflict situation, while that for Ethiopia on food assistance to Sudanese, Somali and Eritrean refugees.
61. The Board supported both PRROs, commending the government collaboration and ownership involved and the PRRO's use of local procurement and cash and voucher schemes. Members stressed the need to cooperate with other agencies working in Ethiopia and Burundi. Some Board members expressed concern about increased ration sizes in Ethiopia; and the targeting strategy, use of general food distributions rather than food for work (FFW) and lack of non-food items in Burundi.
62. Responding to the Board, the Burundi country director explained that the targeting strategy was based on the findings of very recent food security assessments and consultations with partners in the country. A participatory approach had been used to evaluate the previous PRRO and identify the needs for preparing Burundi for a country programme in 2010. It had recommended general food distributions to save lives and reduce vulnerability during the transition, with increased FFW activities and the introduction of voucher and cash schemes during 2010. Seed protection rations were not applicable in Burundi, as hungry farmers were eligible for general food distributions. School feeding would be used in the recovery component, and not for relief.

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO

Country Programme Niger 10614.0 (2009–2013) (2008/EB.2/15)

Development Project Côte d'Ivoire 10759.0 (2008/EB.2/16)

63. Introducing the proposed development project, "Support to Sustainable School Feeding", the Secretariat drew the Board's attention to the fact that it supported national development strategies, especially with regard to access to education, and that it was in line with MDG 2 and with Strategic Objectives 4 and 5. The project aimed to increase primary school enrolment, stabilize attendance and build government capacity with a view to enabling it to sustain the school feeding operation following a gradual hand-over.
64. The Board welcomed the document, in particular approving the work to increase government capacities to the point where it could assume ownership of school feeding. Several Board members drew attention to previous successful outcomes of school feeding programmes, especially where WFP had worked in partnership with other agencies and NGOs: such successes included reduced food insecurity, enhanced recovery from crises, increased farm productivity and incomes, and improved management capacities. The



importance of approaching the school feeding programme in a holistic manner was emphasized by several members; this included ensuring the involvement of parents and families. Board members also approved the alignment of the development project with Côte d'Ivoire's UNDAF and PRSP, and with WFP's Strategic Objectives. Several members noted the need for accurate M&E to ensure optimum effectiveness. Some Board members, noting that government capacity was the critical factor and that some of the assumptions of future developments seemed optimistic, asked for clarification on these points.

65. The Secretariat thanked the Board for its support. The country director emphasized that the programme was fully supported by the relevant ministries, that funding was available and that experience in the country indicated that the proposed hand-over was a realistic prospect. Cooperation among United Nations agencies and other bodies was effective and would continue. The programme would address the needs of girls, aiming to achieve parity of educational opportunity.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Biennial Programme of Work of the Executive Board (2009–2010) (2008/EB.2/17)

66. The Secretariat presented this document for the Board's approval, recalling that it was a living document that was regularly updated with information from the Secretariat and Board members, and reviewed by the Bureau.
67. The Board requested that certain observations be noted for the Bureau's attention:
- There should be a more strategic approach to the Programme of Work. Rather than presenting documents as a matter of course, strategic choices should be made on the basis of defined criteria on what projects and policies would likely be required, and which would be most important.
 - The Board should consider how to stay abreast of humanitarian assistance issues – including the current reforms – and other elements of the broader context in which Board business was conducted, such as the Accra Agenda for Action and the Paris Declaration.
 - The role of informal consultations in relation to Board meetings needed to be clarified.
68. In response to questions from the Board, the Secretariat explained that an updated compendium of all WFP policies and strategies was presented to the Board at each Second Regular Session. As to which country programmes were included, this was determined jointly with the national governments and United Nations country teams concerned, in line with the UNDAFs. Informal consultations were meant to supplement but not replace Board meetings, with the objective of making the best use of Board time. However, in the case of the RBM framework, timing issues had pressed the Secretariat to propose at an informal consultation that the RBM framework be rolled out to country offices by January 2009, with the understanding that it could be adjusted in response to Board comments. The Board requested that the framework be presented at the First Regular Session in 2009. The President of the Board assured the members that the Bureau would examine closely and follow up on the proposals made by the Board under this agenda item.



ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL MATTERS

Review of the Increased Delegation of Authority to the Executive Director (2008/EB.2/18)

69. The Secretariat reminded the Board of its decisions in 2004 to increase the level of authority delegated to the Executive Director to approve PRROs and budget increases to PRROs, from a food value of US\$3 million to a food value of US\$20 million; this delegated authority had been used for approximately 18 percent of the operations approved since then. At the same time, the Board had re-introduced a procedure of approval by correspondence, which had been used once in 2007 and six times in 2008; the decision had been taken in view of the need for a mechanism that allowed the components of relief operations to be adjusted rapidly in case of extraordinary circumstances. In 2005, the Board had also increased the delegation of authority of the Executive Director in relation to country programmes (CPs); that delegation of authority had been used 12 times and represented 20 percent of the value of the total CP budget revisions.
70. One Board member, supported by several other members, expressed interest in more substantive Board discussion of operations in order to increase the opportunities for more critical and constructive dialogue on projects: currently, few substantial amendments were suggested, and no projects were rejected. Some Board members felt a need for greater insight into how projects were developed before arriving at the approval stage, and for increased opportunities to exercise their oversight functions; such opportunities were also linked to some donors' willingness to provide unearmarked funding. Some members requested a review of the delegated authority at the Second Regular Session of 2009. Concerns were also raised about the increased number and levels of projects and budget increases approved by correspondence recently. On the other hand, the mechanisms under discussion accelerated the approval process and allowed the Board to concentrate more on strategic and policy matters. In general, the Board felt that the Executive Director should retain the flexibility to approve projects up to the agreed food value and confirmed the levels of delegation of authority.
71. The Secretariat thanked the Board for its observations, noting that in most cases approval of operations also involved in-country discussions with recipient governments, donors and partners. The Secretariat also noted that approval by correspondence had been used more often in 2008 because it had been an exceptional year in many ways.

OTHER BUSINESS

Report of the WFP Executive Board Members on their Visit to Honduras (2008/EB.2/20)

72. The Representative of Cuba presented the report of the visit of Board members to Honduras, which took place in late September. Honduras had suffered from deforestation and repeated flooding, further increasing already high levels of poverty and malnutrition. The delegation had been impressed with WFP field operations in the country in partnership with the Government and as a member of the United Nations country team. The school feeding programme was nearing the point of full national funding and had been successful in addressing malnutrition and anaemia among schoolchildren. The delegation recommended, among other things, that WFP seek further support for mother-child health



activities and that contributions be made to the PRRO to allow for improved response to emergencies. The delegation had also taken advantage of a stop-over in Guatemala to visit a local nutritional supplement factory. Board members expressed appreciation to the Governments of both Honduras and Guatemala, and to WFP staff, for the support they had given the delegation. In turn, the Regional Director of OMP expressed appreciation for the visit, and the President of the Board encouraged further Board visits to the field.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ART	antiretroviral therapy
CFA	Central African franc
CP	country programme
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EMMA	Emerging Market Mitigation Account
EMOP	emergency operation
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GMO	genetically modified organisms
IDP	internally displaced person
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	non-governmental organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OEDE	Director of the Office of Evaluation
OIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
OMB	Regional Bureau Bangkok (Asia)
OMC	Regional Bureau Cairo (Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe)
OMP	Regional Bureau Panama City (Latin America and the Caribbean)
PACE	Performance and Competency Enhancement
PEPFAR	United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSA	Programme Support and Administrative
RBM	results-based management
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping
WHO	World Health Organization
WINGS II	WFP Information Network and Global System II