

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME INDUCTION SESSION
(Rome, 7 December 2006)

I. THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Functions

As for functions of the Executive Board everybody can get acquainted with them while studying WFP General Regulations and General Rules. In short, there are the following functions of the Board:

- It helps evolve and coordinate short-term and longer-term food aid policies;
- It is responsible for the intergovernmental supervision and direction of management of WFP;
- It considers and approves the proposed Management Plan, including the Budget, prior to the financial period covered by the Management Plan;
- It reviews, modifies as necessary, and approves programmes, projects and activities submitted to it by the Executive Director. In respect of such approvals, however, it may delegate to the Executive Director such authority as it may specify. It reviews, modifies as necessary, and approves the budgets of programmes, projects and activities of WFP;
- It exercises full intergovernmental supervision and scrutiny of all aspects of the WFP Fund;
- It appoints an External Auditor to perform the audit of accounts of WFP;
- It carries out such other responsibilities as are conferred upon it in the WFP General Regulations.

Working methods

The Board holds an annual session and such regular sessions as it considers necessary and, in exceptional circumstances, may hold special sessions.

As a rule there are three sessions of the Board per year: an annual session (in May or June) and two regular sessions: one - at the beginning of the year (in February) and another - in the end of the year (in October).

In 2006 there was also a special session. But, as I said before, it had been convened because of exceptional circumstances - for appointment of a new Executive Director of WFP.

All its decisions the WFP Executive Board approves by consensus.

II. BUREAU OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Composition of the Bureau:

Bureau of the Executive Board consists of five Members, one member from each electoral list of States: A, B, C, D and E. In other words, they represent five regional groups in WFP – African countries (List A), Asian and middle East countries (with exception of Japan) (List B), Latin America and the Caribbean countries (List C), OECD countries (List D), Eastern and Central European countries (List E).

The Bureau is headed by the President of the Executive Board, and one of its Members is nominated as a Vice-President. Usually Members of the Bureau are elected for one-year period. But he/she can be reelected for a new one-year period if his/her List so has decided.

In 2006 there was the following composition of the Bureau: H.E. Mirza Qamar Beg (Pakistan), President and Representative of List B; H.E. Ewald Wermuth (The Netherlands) , Vice President and Representative of List D; and three other Members - Mr. Emile Essema (Republic of Congo), Representative of List A; H.E. Don Alfredo Nestor Puig (Cuba), Representative of List C; and me, Mr. Alexander A. Titarenko (Russian Federation), Representative of List E.

Bureau role and functions:

The main role of the Bureau is to facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of the Board as for: (a) strategic planning of the work of the Board; (b) preparation and organization of meetings. For these purposes it: (1) promotes dialogue with the Lists; (2) facilitates communication during inter-session periods; (3) gives guidance to the Secretariat.

There can be other functions as directed by the Board.

Usually the Bureau convenes one meeting per month. But, if it is necessary, there can be more meetings. In recent period the volume of work of the Bureau significantly has increased.

III. FIELD VISITS

The Executive Board is organizing field visits to the recipient countries with participation of its Members. For Board Members it is very important to receive the information at first hand for decision-making purposes.

There are two types of field visits:

(1) Joint field visits of four UN agencies – World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Usually there is one joint visit per year;

(2) WFP field visits. There can be more than one WFP field visit per year: the quantity of them depends on the necessity for the Organization to receive a clear picture about the humanitarian situation in this or that country.

Sometimes the planned WFP field visits do not take place because of an instable security situation in the country. For these reasons, for example, a field visit to Yemen has been postponed.

A few words about the joint field visit this year to Indonesia in which I have participated as a rapporteur from WFP.

While being in Indonesia, first of all, the team visited Banda Aceh. There was the epicentre of the tsunami on 26th of December, 2004. At least 167,000 people, most of them women, children and old men, had been lost in the flood, and over 500,000 people had left homeless in this area. The coastal infrastructure was similarly ruined as the waves rendered unusable some 1,800 bridges, 1,585 kilometers of road and over 2,200 schools were wiped out.

I'll give you only one example what we have seen in this place. Try to imagine yourself a ship which indeed is an electric power station. It is huge by size, length and height. It weights a few thousand tons. And this ship was lifted by a wave like a fluff and then transferred from the sea to the Banda Aceh built-up area over a distance of about five kilometers!

We visited different places in Indonesia and received a lot of information not only about the country and its people but - and it was the main reason of our visit - to get acquainted there with the work of the UN humanitarian agencies and, in particular, WFP.

We also discussed with our colleagues from New York what have been achieved and what could be done to improve mutual cooperation between the UN humanitarian agencies.

I cannot say that everything is so good in this regard. There can be found some explanation. WFP is a young international organization in compare with New York based organizations. And I hope for these simple reasons at first stage of the visit our New York colleagues sometimes "forgot" to mention WFP during meetings of the joint field visit team with local authorities. Every time they stressed how much the New York based organizations are doing in the field of humanitarian aid to Indonesia not mentioning the contribution of WFP at all. Moreover, in the draft report version prepared in New York on results of the joint field visit to Indonesia there was deleted such an important fact that WFP was the first international agency which began to distribute food among victims of the tsunami starting 1 January 2005, in a week after it had taken place!

Reaching 1.2 million beneficiaries in April 2005, this has been a safety net for the tsunami affected people who were vulnerable to food security and malnutrition.

WFP is not only the most effective international humanitarian agency, it is very modest one. While participating in the joint field visit to Indonesia the WFP team focused its attention on what can be done better in future, how to solve problems arisen with joint efforts, how to do the humanitarian operations more cost-saving and so on. Saying it I try to indicate that there are different approaches. And if we want to strengthen our cooperation with our partners we should move to each other. My personal view is that WFP is ahead of other organizations as for management, effectiveness and final results of its work, its contribution in the humanitarian sphere. It does not mean that experience, positive one, of other organizations should be neglected. We study it and try to use in our work. But I would like to stress: there is a two way road.

Why I talking about it? Only for one reason: everybody, who is engaged to work in the humanitarian sphere, should know that WFP is the biggest international humanitarian agency in the world. It helps daily with food to millions people suffering of natural disasters, man-made conflicts and other emergency situations. Here, in this room, we are discussing pragmatic things how to organize food aid as soon as possible to help the vulnerable groups of population in any place in the world. It is a business-like organization, where there is no place for idle talks. WFP avoids to discuss political issues. For them there are other forums like the United Nations General Assembly in New York, for example.

Each UN agency is trying to do the best in the framework of its mandate. WFP has good relations with its sister\brother organizations. If necessary, it helps them as it has been done in Indonesia. Nobody but the WFP employees helped all organizations – intergovernmental and non-governmental - in construction their camps in Banda Aceh and other places, providing their security, delivering materials and goods to Indonesia by WFP ships and so on.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that there is a good level of cooperation between WFP and other humanitarian agencies. But I believe that it could be better. We are doing a common cause, and we are interested in improving the cooperation with all partners in the sphere of humanitarian aid.

Lessons learned during the field visit. There can be a long list of them. I'll mention only a few of them. The main reason of the field visits is to receive more information in the field. It is necessary for the Board of each international agency involved in the process of providing humanitarian assistance to take an appropriate

decision in relation to the corresponding country. If the situation is really grave and serious than there will be one decision, if there is no urgency and the country can manage without any external assistance, then there will be another decision.

While preparing a field visit it is important to pay more attention to the abilities of a person nominated by a regional group to do such things as stating on paper his/her conclusions, defending the decisions of the Organization he/she represents, asking national, regional and local authorities questions to obtain more specific information on the subject and so on. A field visit should not be considered like a tourist trip : it is indeed a very hard work.

And then I consider that there should not be a routine approach in relation to a nomination of the main rapporteur. Because this person, like a goalkeeper in hockey or soccer, can save the match or lose it. And in this regard I consider that the Secretariat should help regional groups to collect such participants for the field visit who can give real contribution as for the final results of it. Frankly speaking, the Secretariat knows better about us than we about ourselves.

And I want to thank all WFP employees working here, in the HQs, and in the field for their daily support and assistance.

That's all I wanted to tell you. If there are any questions I'll try to answer them.

Alexander A.TITARENKO
2005-2006 WFP Bureau Member