

## **Opening Remarks**

### **David Kaatrud, Regional Director, Asia & the Pacific Bureau Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board, June 2016**

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Thank you, Madam President.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to provide you with an update on our work in the Asia and Pacific region.

The region remains dynamic with rapid but sometimes unsustainable and inequitable growth often prioritising, for example, infrastructure investments over spending on social services. This runs the risk of leaving behind vulnerable populations with related nutrition issues, such as stunting. It is a region, which is rapidly urbanising with growing concern over an ageing workforce, with attendant effects on food security. Asia and the Pacific also face increasing climate volatility in historically the most disaster prone region of the world.

All of this will continue to generate new sets of food and nutrition security issues but through our dual mandate, we feel WFP can remain relevant and gainfully contribute to addressing these challenges.

Madam President, you have led a discussion earlier in the week on the Annual Performance Report so I will not go into any great details on our work in 2015 but will provide a few highlights and perspectives. In numbers, we remain about 15 per cent of WFP's global throughput with downward trends in terms of people directly reached and

tonnage distributed. Use of cash-based transfers is growing although modestly and we continue to build capacity through our efforts. These figures do not, however, reflect the growing number of vulnerable populations which are indirectly benefiting from WFP's work in the area of technical assistance, capacity development, etc. in contexts such as India, and now Indonesia, which we hope to better articulate in future reporting.

In terms of Outcomes, we continue to save lives with a fair amount of emergency related work stemming from natural disaster throughout the region plus some conflict in Afghanistan and Myanmar for example. We were also reasonably successful in preserving acceptable food consumption scores and nutrition indicators in vulnerable and stressed environments.

Progress was also made in building capacity and, in turn, resilience at the community and national levels, and headway was made on nutrition issues throughout the region, which was prioritised as part of our efforts.

The key to success for some of the highlights provided here are where we are properly and consistently resourced fully, leverage partnerships, had skilled staff in place and had established a line of communication with affected populations and communities.

Furthermore, achievements in 2015 can be attributed to improved targeting and prioritisation of beneficiaries; increased efforts to mitigate resourcing shortfalls with innovative strategies; improved information-sharing with beneficiaries to ensure they understand their entitlements and where and how to voice complaints and feedback;

and the level of cooperation among our Country Offices and the Regional Bureau as well as with host Governments and cooperating partners.

General challenges relate to episodes of severe funding constraints, cutbacks in programme, staffing levels, and changing political scenarios. All of these have to be mitigated and, in the longer run, addressed through staff development, intensified partnerships and better risk management. Prioritisation is normally dealt through preserving depth of our interventions over breadth of coverage, particularly for activities related to life-saving and nutrition outcomes.

While the current portfolio will continue much of the same work and trends in 2016, we are very conscious that this portfolio was designed within the MDG framework, which has come to an end. We are entering a significantly new era framed by the new Global Agenda and WFP's policy adjustments in the face of this agenda.

The new Global Agenda is well known to all assembled here, and along with our government counterparts, agency and donor partners we are all coming to grips with each component of this Global effort. There are three major inter-governmentally agreed frameworks (Agenda2030, Sendai and COP21) with clear Member State accountability plus one important multi-stakeholder process, the World Humanitarian Summit.

In retrospect, more attention could have been paid to designing these frameworks in an integrated fashion. While even now it is challenging to find guidance on how these

frameworks relate, there seems to be a growing view that they link through the concept of “Risk Management”.

In the Bureau, we agree with this risk-based approach and the current paradigm we are using is reflected in the slide behind me where Agenda 2030 is viewed as a “Strategic Development Plan” in which development is not sustainable unless it is “Risk Informed”. From this perspective, the Sendai DRR and COP21 frameworks essentially provide the “Risk Mitigation” for Agenda 2030 to minimise the effects of periodic disaster related shocks on the progress to achieving of the SDG’s.

While the DRR and Climate Change frameworks can serve to mitigate many risks, there will be “Residual Risk” or large-scale or unforeseen disasters whether natural (e.g. earthquakes) or man-made, which can be managed, in part, through the emergency preparedness related “frameworks” developed as part of the WHS.

In sum, what is depicted here forms a nexus of development and humanitarian work all of which is nationally led with agencies like WFP providing support to the development and mitigation work, and augmentation to nationally led responses for residual risk guided by humanitarian principles.

Given the fact that WFP’s dual mandate relates to nearly all of the components of this “framework-of-frameworks”, we are keenly aware that the Global Agenda will greatly inform the major strategic shifts you are currently being debated in the Board which has its own set of frameworks but is being designed in a more integrated fashion. We are

now working on making this strategic shift in the region using the two stage process described in the draft CSP Policy; supporting a Strategic Review to interpret how SDG2 will be attained in a given country context which, in turn will frame the most appropriate WFP intervention drawing upon a broad array of tools going beyond only direct delivery of food assistance.

We have just completed a comprehensive plan to complete the shift in the region within two years - the details of which are shown here. The Strategic Review process is advancing nicely beyond the pilots in India, Indonesia and Cambodia last year and we are well into the next tranche building on lessons from the piloting phase – Laos and Bangladesh will be published this summer and the others are well advanced with the Conveners and Technical Review Teams in place. It is important to note that this Strategic Review process can proceed at full tilt despite any possible delays in finalising agreement and formal approval by the Board on the programme governance approach. These Strategic Reviews must proceed if WFP is to understand the post-2015 context for whatever programmes we need to design going forward and remain as relevant as possible at the country level.

Introduction of a new programme governance approach being discussed in the Board will essentially involve a project portfolio migration from the current 30 plus projects to around 14. Although we fully recognise that full agreement has not been reached in the Board on the Country Strategy Plan, there are certain givens such as being more outcome-oriented, using new modalities to provide food assistance (e.g. capacity

development, cash-based transfers, etc.) that can be developed now as part of the Programme of Work we have agreed with the board.

Therefore, the countries depicted in regular font on the calendar behind me represent projects that we will be coming to the Board on schedule in either the traditional or new project formats, and the countries in italics represent projects that would go forward before their current due date to be aligned with national development planning and UNDAF planning cycles under the new CSP approach.

In sum, we can either keep pace with the full migration over two years; or maintain the status quo programme governance and adhere to the current Programme of Work; or use this region for piloting for CSP conversion in all or a select number of countries anytime in the 2017-8 timeframe – we will remain flexible to what ever course of action aligns with the Board’s decision.

While this is a significant strategic shift for WFP we need to give due attention to the Management structures to ensure that they are as “fit” and enabling as possible. Despite the potentially radical programme designs that may result from the strategic shift, in RBB, we will continue to employ the corporate “Fit-For-Purpose” approach which has served us well over the last few years and, we feel, is appropriate through the 2017 Management Plan.

For the Programme thrust area we will continue with the four pillar approach of: Scaling up Nutrition; enhancing national Social Protection systems and related food-based

Safety Nets; Building Resilience (DRR); and strengthening Emergency Preparedness and Response capabilities – all of which I have described in detail in previous Board sessions. We are paying increasing attention to the crosscutting themes, which we feel will play an increasingly prominent role going forward. In this regard, we are progressing on Gender, guided primarily by the mainstreaming of the new Gender Policy, and Assessment & Analysis or “VAM” work, which is increasingly sophisticated and joined up with national counterparts. However, where we need further work area in the crosscutting areas of M&E, Knowledge Management, Urban Programming and Protection.

For the People thrust area, guided by the People’s Strategy, we are working to be right sized, including the balance between international and national posts, gender parity, and the use of short-term expertise. We will also work towards having a workforce with the appropriate profiles and skills sets some of which will have to be developed through training and re-tooling of existing staff, and others through proper talent acquisition for certain skillsets.

For Partnership, we have a regional strategy, which applies the Corporate Partnership Strategy. National partnerships go beyond government and include local civil society and private sector. Inter-agency partnerships will be critical, particularly the RBAs (Rome-Based Agencies) and UNICEF. We are also going to prioritise the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as Asian Development Bank (I will be in Manila next week to further advance our discussions), the New Development - or “BRICS” - Bank and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank plus the World Bank aligned with our

global efforts. Traditional donors will remain as important as ever but the nature of the dialogue and the means of support may change (e.g. twinning or joint advocacy).

In terms of Processes, we are on track for the corporate systems rollouts for LESS, COMET and SPRING throughout the region during the course of this year. However, we are challenged with SCOPE, which is getting special attention. We are also prioritising making the region “FFR-ready” and are actively engaged in pilots in Indonesia and Pakistan with a very positive experience in both, and we are willing to take additional piloting, as required.

On Accountability, as alluded earlier, we are challenged with measuring outcomes and demonstrating impacts particularly as we move “upstream” and working more closely with government partners on joint outcomes. As part of our work on these issues, we will aim to be “CRF-Ready” this year and next, as that framework is progressively defined.

In terms of short-term challenges, while the climate phenomenon of “El Niño” has been declared over, the food security effects on vulnerable populations and communities persist. We are still engaged in assisting government response to these lasting effects through Assessment and Decision-Support type work in various countries. Through this experience we have developed and applied some new approaches, including the use of “big data” jointly with government and other partners, such as Global Pulse. We have learned a great deal over the last few months, which will inform how this type of work will be done in future. In the case of Indonesia, the success of this approach is reflected



in the recent move of our joint analysis & assessment work with government to the Office of the President.

In other cases, we have been asked to augment government response with emergency operations have been undertaken in PNG, Fiji and Sri Lanka or current project resources being redirected to assist in the response, such as in Timor-Leste, Nepal and Philippines. In the particular cases of Fiji and Sri Lanka, it is useful to note that we have managed to work with our national counterparts to introduce a cash-based interventions through local social safety nets, which had not been used previously to respond to shocks in those countries (this is similar to the approach now used routinely by the Dept. of Social Welfare in Philippines to response to shocks).

While we are still contending with the effects of El Niño, we now face an escalating probability for a La Niña event later this year and have initiated contingency planning and preparedness activities with Government and agency partners in the countries listed here; some of which will face flooding and storms; and others, which will face drought. Unfortunately, some of these countries will face the compounded effects of El Niño and then La Niña. We will keep you informed on our residual El Niño work and future La Niña plans in the Asia and Pacific region through an up-coming event here in Rome on 6 July.

In the medium term, over the next two years, some of the challenges we are concerned with are listed here. Firstly, we are concerned with the demands of adhering to an ambitious timeframe for implementing the strategic shift on one hand while coping with

the inevitable shocks that periodically shake the region on the other; as seen in the Nepal Earthquake and TC Pam in Vanuatu last year and more recently in the earthquake response in south-western Japan where the Bureau led a WFP effort to provide logistics services to assist the Kunamoto Prefecture and the Government of Japan in their response efforts.

We also are concerned that we have adequate programming tools and approaches to meet the needs of the future pertaining to nutrition (particularly stunting), social protection, resilience/DRR and urban programming.

Resourcing will continue to be a challenge in the fragile protracted environments. PRRO's in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, Myanmar and DPRK are all experiencing strained pipelines. At the same time, we will need to develop new channels of "domestic resourcing" from Government and the domestic private sector. We would like to expand the twinning approach, such as we have in the case of Pakistan, to other countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, etc. but will need donor support for this. We would also like to build on this in-kind type of support and introduce more direct funding from national budgets to WFP in-country activities as we have done with India and Indonesia.

Finally, as we make the strategic shift we may find ourselves with reduced footprints or less presence at the sub-national level, plus smaller workforces with new and often non-emergency skill profiles. The concern we have in the Bureau is how to maintain some of

our traditional strengths of connecting with communities, and affected populations as well as emergency response capacity at the national level.

Madam President, as you can see we are increasingly aware of the profound change brought about by the new post-2015 development and humanitarian frameworks and understand this will mean that WFP will have to work differently to attain different results, particularly in a region such as Asia and the Pacific. After our Regional CD meeting held just prior to this Annual session, I can attest to the fact that the WFP leadership team in the region is embracing this inevitable change and already beginning to revisit the way we design and execute our interventions. We look forward to working with yourself and the membership on the journey towards ultimately ending hunger while alleviating the effects of shocks along the way.

With that I thank you.