

STATEMENT OF DALY BELGASMI, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, ODC
WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD
14 FEBRUARY 2012

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The **MENA** region remains devoid of an inclusive social and economic development agenda. The region continues to face overall economic slowdown, reductions in trade, tourism and foreign investment.
- Overall insecurity, high unemployment and growing social unrest are dampening growth prospects. Rising food prices present a serious challenge given the heavy dependency on food imports; MENA is the most import-dependent region in the world, **importing more than 50 percent of its population's daily caloric intake.**
- While the food security **situation in the Caucasus and Central Asia is generally improving**, the poorest populations continue to be hard hit by high food prices.
- Knock-on effects of the Eurozone crisis could limit the employment prospects of migrant workers, drastically cutting incomes at home which may result in social and political instability.
- In ODC, Governments intent on delivering reforms need to place emphasis on recovery, and focus on fiscal sustainability, job creation and protecting the poor.
- WFP ODC continues to address the short term food security challenges in the context of relief and recovery operations, while placing special emphasis on building national capacities to ensure long-term sustainable impact.
- In 2012, WFP ODC plans to place strategic focus on three major goals: i) Strengthening emergency disaster/preparedness response; ii) Enhancing national food security including Food Subsidy and food supply chain enhancement, and support to Safety Nets Systems; and iii) contributing to the improvement of regional nutrition and addressing 'hidden hunger'.
- In addition, within the framework of the ODC strategy, WFP in partnership with UN agencies, governments and civil society will contribute to the creation of job opportunities and promotion of local economies.
- This year, WFP plans on serving 7.2 million beneficiaries through 24 operations. Our operations this year will continue to be guided by new trends and face increasing challenges.

- Given the situation in the region, **ODC is fully committed to ensuring that our offices and operations are prepared for further emergency response.** Seven countries in the region have already adopted WFP's new approach to preparedness planning while four countries facing internal or cross-border emergencies have prepared their concept of operations for the emergency response. Continuity plans are also now in place for countries facing increasing challenges.
- Within the bureau, **we have reinforced our preparedness unit** with the deployment of a senior emergency coordinator and with regional initiatives such as staff deployment rosters, risk matrices and improved early warning reporting.
- **Our emergency response efforts are now focused on the crisis in Yemen and Syria.**
- Despite a deteriorating security environment, WFP Yemen has expanded its operations countrywide with an increase of 56 percent of the number of beneficiaries from 2010/11. WFP's EMOP is targeting 650,000 persons affected by displacement and conflict countrywide, specifically in the north and the south. WFP is providing assistance to some 80,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Aden who have been displaced by fighting in the neighboring Abyan Governorate.
- It is estimated that about 1.4 million people in Syria are suffering from food insecurity in hotspot areas due to a disruption of their livelihoods and shortages of basic goods including food, water and fuel.
- Increasing needs have seen the emergency operation doubling to serve 100,000 from January till June 2012. In addition to the unrest, 300,000 people are food insecure due to four consecutive droughts in north eastern Syria.
- Our response to the North Africa crisis continues into the New Year with more focus on transition to recovery and stability.
- In Libya, WFP continues to adjust its response to humanitarian needs in areas heavily affected by fighting – such as Sirte, Bani Walid, Misrata. General food distributions are being scaled down, and a new pilot voucher programme – where beneficiaries exchange a voucher, to buy food and other non-food items – was recently launched in Benghazi. WFP has provided support to **over 1.2 million people in Libya** since the conflict began in February 2011.
- In **Tunisia and Egypt**, WFP continues to provide support to those affected by the unrest in North Africa.
- School Feeding Programmes are being implemented in 9 countries as a safety net component of food assistance. Our key priority is to integrate school feeding programmes in national action plans and budgets, to ensure sustainable and successful

handover. Significant progress has been made in Armenia and Tajikistan where WFP is contributing to Governments' national education strategy.

- ODC continues to implement with proven success voucher programmes in 6 countries as a safety net alternative, making use of the functioning markets and contributing to boosting the local economies when possible.
- This year, ODC is also prioritizing Food and/or cash for work and Asset activities design and targeting to ensure more effective contributions to job creation to boost recovery efforts.
- Building on previous successes, ODC is expanding technical assistance to enhance national capacities in Jordan, Iraq, and Azerbaijan to manage the supply chain efficiently and/or design and implement effective social safety nets to protect vulnerable groups.
- I wish to mention that as ODC continues to address the increasing challenges of the region, special attention is placed on expanding our network of regional partners. Over the last few months, we have worked closely with UN agencies; Regional UNDGs, Regional coordination mechanisms, the League of Arab States, donor groups and others, to better address regional needs.
- On the country level, we continue to provide support in our day-to-day operations through partnering with FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP and others.
- Finally I wish to underline that more than ever the civil society and the people of the countries we serve are truly our most important partner. As the ED mentioned yesterday, dependency is the collapse of hope and the age of dependency is over.
- As we face 2012 challenges, Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, we continue to count on your support. Thank you.