

OD Johannesburg Regional Director's presentation at  
the WFP Executive Board

7-11 June 2010

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to update you on key developments in the Horn of Africa region and to inform you of our progress in applying new approaches to address hunger, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS.

When I last briefed the Executive Board in February, the food security situation in the greater HoA region was dire but there were tentative signs of recovery. I am extremely pleased to report that the number of people needing food assistance in the Horn of Africa region has indeed declined by an estimated 40% to some 9.2 million. This is largely a result of good rains which has led to an improvement in the availability of water and pasture and normal to slightly above normal harvests from the short rainy season. The ability of the most vulnerable to weather the crisis, protect their livelihoods and embark on recovery has been greatly boosted by the generous food assistance provided by donors. In 2009, almost 1.5 million mt of food was provided through WFP in the HoA region. I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation for this tremendous support.

But livelihoods in the HoA remain fragile. As long as millions depend on rain fed agriculture and as long as communities remain exposed to drought, conflict, economic crisis and HIV/AIDS, we cannot let our guard down. The gains made in food security can quickly be reversed unless we help communities to become more resilient to droughts and other risks, including climate change.

WFP was forced to suspend operations in much of southern Somalia in January because of unacceptable threats, demands and intimidation from armed groups in the region. WFP cannot reach 1 million people in areas where its operations are suspended or food deliveries are blocked. Nevertheless, we remain operational in the capital Mogadishu,

as well as in central and northern Somalia where we are targeting over 1 million people with regular food assistance.

A total of 80,000 prepared meals are served daily to the hungry across Mogadishu. In addition, WFP in May started general food distributions to some 185,000 handicapped or elderly people and their families in the capital.

We hope to be able to resume operations in southern Somalia as soon as possible, but this depends on the armed groups that forced us to suspend. Due to the fluidity and complexity of the situation in Somalia, WFP and UNHCR have prepared contingency plans in the event of population movements inside of Somalia or into neighbouring countries.

To improve the effectiveness of our humanitarian response, particularly in the Horn of Africa, we introduced in 2008 the Forward Purchase Facility. Since late 2008, almost 380,000 mt of food has been mobilised under this facility, mostly for the HoA operations. This facility has proven to be an effective mechanism to rapidly respond to pipeline breaks by providing food faster to beneficiaries once funding is available to the CO. For example, in August last year WFP was able to reduce the lead time of getting food to refugees in Kenya from the normal 2-3 months to only 10 days by using the facility to preposition stocks in Mombasa. Similarly, for the Uganda refugee operation, prepositioned stocks in Kampala saved some six weeks in delivery time compared to normal local purchase.

Conflict, insecurity, difficult access to beneficiaries, resource shortfalls and quickly changing needs make the nature of our work in the region risk sensitive. We therefore strive to continuously improve the effectiveness of our controls and our capacity to mitigate the impact of risks and, where possible, help avoid them. Each WFP CO in the region maintains a risk register that is consolidated by the bureau and used to assess the risks faced by country offices and to prioritise the bureau's oversight missions. Our work conforms to WFP's corporate efforts in this regard. In fact, Ethiopia has been chosen as a pilot country for WFP's financial risk management framework. This initiative will help identify financial risks faced by the Country Office from a bottom up perspective rather than from Hq or functional perspective.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

In the coming 12 months, over half a million people in the region are estimated to benefit through cash and voucher programmes. These programmes stimulate and support local market structures while addressing food insecurity. They have shown to provide considerable potential to provide safety nets in response to high food prices and economic recession. In Kenya, the Government and WFP are implementing a government-funded new food subsidy programme to serve as a food safety net for the most vulnerable of the urban poor. The first phase of the pilot project is implemented by WFP, Oxfam and Concern and will target 20,000 food insecure families in the Nairobi slums. Cash will be transferred to beneficiaries electronically using mobile phones and through micro-finance institutions. The programme will expand to Mombasa and Kisumu targeting an additional 20,000 families.

In Zimbabwe, WFP incorporated into the PRRO a cash transfer programme that reached almost 60,000 people during peak lean season. A food for assets programme started in January for some 20,000 beneficiaries. The Zimbabwe Country Office is also preparing to implement an electronic voucher initiative for 50,000 people and is joining forces with FAO to implement a conservation farming programme. In Uganda's drought-prone Karamoja province, WFP is focusing on promoting long-term food security through strengthening rural livelihoods, while continuing to provide emergency food assistance to the most vulnerable.

Collaboration between WFP and national governments in support of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) has intensified in the past year. Several countries have specifically requested WFP's support for the preparation of CAADP compacts and investment plans. To date six countries in the ODJ region have signed a CAADP compact (Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda, Swaziland and Malawi) and several countries are at an advanced planning stage. WFP country offices are placing their unique expertise at the disposal of governments. WFP's involvement helps to ensure that hunger reduction programmes and activities are embedded in the CAADP process. In Rwanda WFP worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources to help finalise the CAADP

investment plan, contributing especially to developing the home-grown school meals concept with links to P4P.

WFP's support to the HIV/AIDS response in eastern and southern Africa has evolved rapidly and extensively in the past few years. The number of patients on anti retroviral treatment and receiving WFP nutritional support increased from 95,000 in 2008 to 119,000 in 2009, in 16 of the 20 countries in the ODJ region. Food assistance contributes to improved treatment outcomes in HIV and TB related programmes and offers enhanced social and productive safety nets for people affected by HIV and AIDS. In Ethiopia, a WFP supported programme has considerably increased ART adherence among 17,000 treatment patients. In Mozambique, WFP provides technical support to the Ministry of Health in delivering a basic food basket to malnourished ART patients in the form of a voucher scheme, while also delivering direct food assistance to some 28,000 malnourished people living with HIV. In Zambia, electronic vouchers developed by WFP in partnership with the private sector facilitate ART patients' easy access to food packages through retailers while reducing the burden on health workers.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The southern and eastern Africa region is severely affected by high levels of stunting, underweight and wasting. To better support COs in addressing the challenges of undernutrition, the bureau has developed a Regional Nutrition Approach. This regional approach follows the strategic principles of WFP's Global Nutrition Approach but it is adjusted to accommodate region-specific issues. The regional approach centers on local food fortification, local production of nutritionally enhanced foods and partnerships. Initiatives for local production and utilization of nutritionally enhanced food products are underway in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia, Malawi and Uganda. A government-supported maize fortification project in Uganda is already being implemented with GAIN. Many other countries are involved in food fortification and are stepping up activities to address mother and child health.

Our Purchase for Progress programmes involve some 45,000 small holder farmers in ten countries of the region. A powerful example of P4P support to small holder farmers comes from rural Kenya where

WFP directly contracted a group of small holder widows and provided them with training in quality control, food storage and handling. The women received a loan from the bank to buy seeds and fertilizers and sold their produce to WFP. But more importantly this group of widows has now become self-sufficient and produces surplus maize for the market. WFP bought 150 mt of maize last year and another 112 mt of maize this year. We are already using the same model with other vulnerable groups.

The effect of climate change on already precarious livelihoods is a major concern for governments in the ODJ region. Climate change will increase frequency and intensity of extreme weather, lead to shifts in growing season, changes in agricultural productivity and rainfall patterns and reduction of water quality and availability. Through innovative food for asset programs such as water harvesting, micro dams, and sustainable land management, WFP seeks to ensure that livelihoods are strengthened with the means to survive in unpredictable climatic environments. We have invested in the region over \$331 million targeted food for asset programmes to help strengthen households and community adaptation to climate change. In Uganda, WFP is leading a UN wide effort, in the form of a joint programme, to strengthen government capacity for climate change adaptation and mitigation at national, district and local levels.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your generous support to WFP programmes in eastern and southern Africa has helped the most vulnerable endure the challenges of weather, conflict, economic difficulties and HIV/AIDS. It has made possible new approaches to food assistance that are now bearing fruit, contributing to building the resilience of fragile livelihoods to droughts and other shocks. I would again like to express my sincere gratitude for your continued support to our work in this region.

Thank you very much.