

OMJ Introductory Statement: EB, October 2008

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen

I would like to give you an overview of critical food security and humanitarian challenges in OMJ region. In this respect, I would like to talk about the impact of High Food Prices in selected countries in the region, the humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa, DRC and Zimbabwe.

1. Effects of high food and fuel prices in the region:

High food prices have deepened the vulnerability and hunger of millions of people throughout eastern, central and southern Africa. As food prices increased, essential non-food expenditures such as school fees, water, cooking fuel and medical assistance are reduced. The worse affected are the elderly, pregnant women, lactating mothers, school children, HIV/AIDS affected people, small farmers and pastoralists.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some innovative responses being implemented in **Djibouti, Uganda and Mozambique** that WFP is implementing in the region in response to high food prices.

In **Djibouti**, which imports almost 80 percent of its food requirements, the food security situation in all regions is deteriorating due to High Food Prices and four consecutive poor rainy seasons. With \$5 million allocated from the High Food and Fuel prices Appeal and the PRRO that is under implementation, WFP is implementing an innovative food voucher programme in Djibouti City for people whose purchasing power to buy food has fallen by more than half. In total, more than 150,000 people will benefit from WFP's response to high food prices and drought in Djibouti. The response to this twin scourges will extend up to April 2009 and requires about USD4 million.

In **Uganda**, since the beginning of the year, prices of basic staple commodities such as maize and beans have increased by about 50 percent. Higher cereal prices have also negatively affected pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods as the terms of trade between livestock and cereals declined. Allocation of \$2.5 million from the High Food and Fuel Prices Appeal will benefit 160,000 people.

In **Mozambique**, increased food prices are threatening social stability, as well as nutritional security, both of which stand to undermine development gains in the country. In response to high food prices in Mozambique, WFP is implementing a comprehensive response incorporating social protection, health and nutrition, and education for vulnerable households in urban and peri-urban areas. In total, more than 160,000 people will receive assistance from WFP's \$5 million EMMA allocation in 2008.

The Governments in these countries have publicly expressed their thanks and appreciation to WFP for protecting the victims of High Food prices in their countries through these pacesetter projects.

2. Humanitarian Crises in Horn of Africa and Karamoja

In the last Board meeting, I informed you about the looming crises in the Horn of Africa and Karamoja region of Uganda where millions of people are caught in the midst of a perfect storm of high food and fuel prices, consecutive years of drought and in some cases insecurity. This is producing a lethal combination of rising malnutrition and high livestock mortality rates, migration of pastoralists, deterioration in terms of trade between livestock and cereals, school drop outs and reduction in the number of meals consumed. We have acted, in concert with other partners to respond to the crisis thanks to your generous contributions. The situation remains very critical indeed as shown by the results of recent assessments. Across the region, more than 17 million people continue to require humanitarian assistance. While there have been some generous contributions to HOA since the donor bulletin of September, the rolling six month shortfall remains very dramatic, currently standing at some USD572 Million.

To maintain a food pipeline in the absence of adequate donor contributions, WFP allocated USD60 million of the funds received in response to the High Food and Fuel Price Appeal to operations in Ethiopia and Somalia and more than 100 million from internal advance financing mechanisms. These advances will have to be repaid in order to ensure that WFP's internal emergency reserves are available for the next crisis.

In **Ethiopia**, more than 12 million people are affected by the High Food and Fuel Prices , drought and in some cases by insecurity. Prices in Somali Region reached 260%. According to the Humanitarian Requirement Document released by Government of Ethiopia 6.4 million are in need of relief assistance. Early warning information indicates that some drought-affected areas in the southern part of the country, including Somali Region could require relief assistance until June 2009. In addition to this, 3.2 million beneficiaries are receiving food under the Government's Productive Safety net Programme as well as targeted supplementary feeding as malnutrition rates are on the increase. Because of lack of adequate food supplies, rations for July through September have been cut by a third. The consequence of this is a spike in malnutrition rates in many parts of pastoralist areas, reduction of meals consumed in a day, drop out of schools and migration in search of food and pasture. To save lives and to prevent a further deterioration in nutritional condition and protect assets and livelihoods, **WFP requires about USD 455 million up to April 2009.**

To ensure effective operational efficiency, A joint WFP/Government of Ethiopia implementation of hubs and spokes has started in the first week of this month and will be completed by January 2009.

In **Somalia**, The assessment of the Long Rainy Season by the Interagency Food Security Analysis Unit concludes that some 3.2 million people, nearly 40 percent of the population are in need of assistance because of successive crop failures, insecurity, hyperinflation and devaluation of the Somali Shilling. WFP plans to provide relief assistance to about 2.4 million people. Recent nutritional assessments indicate acute malnutrition rates

exceeding 15% and some have reported rates around 20%. It is against this background that WFP imported about 90 MT of supplementary plumpy into Somalia last week for 64,000 children over the next 6 months. Quite apart from the spikes in acute malnutrition rates for children under 5, reduction in the terms of trade between small ruminants and cereals, reduction of meals, etc, the situation is triggering population movements in search of food into Kenya thus heightening tensions.

WFP has a robust operational structure and security management system in place and subject to adequate funding, WFP will distribute about 34,000 MT per month up to the end of this year. WFP requires about **USD 77 million up to April 2009**.

As 90 percent of WFP's food arrives by sea, a long term solution to piracy off the coast of Somalia is critical. We are indeed grateful to France, Denmark, Holland and Canada for their provision of the much needed naval escorts which enabled us to ship about 137,000 MT since November. Plans are afoot to bring in 145,000 MT in the coming months. The lack of naval escorts in August led to drastic ration cuts for all categories of beneficiaries,

In **Kenya**, The conclusion of the recent Long Rains Food Security Assessment in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands coupled with results of nutritional surveys indicate a very worrisome situation. Global acute malnutrition rates were reported to be in the order of 28%. Thus the caseload to be assisted has increased from 1.2 million to 1.4 million . **USD27 million required up to April 2009**. Funding shortfalls in October led to a reduced rations for pastoralists in the hard hit areas.

The harvest in the Karamoja region of Uganda is ongoing but assessed to be dismal. About 707,000 Karamojong are assessed to be in need of food assistance up to the beginning of next harvest. A total of **USD9 million is needed up to April 2009**.

The Horn of Africa situation is very dire-acute malnutrition rates are on the increase in all the countries, terms of trade between small ruminants and cereals are on the decline, in some countries, school children are dropping out of school, people are forced to reduce meals consumed and some are resorting to negative coping mechanisms, livestock deaths are commonplace. Immediate action is required to meet the urgent needs and to avoid further ration cuts for those who can least afford them. Post harvest cereal prices are at their seasonal lows in South Africa and this constitutes an opportunity for regional procurement and timely response.

3. Situation in DRC.

The security situation in DRC continues to deteriorate rapidly as the national army and the rebel forces loyal to Laurent Nkunda confront each other despite calls from MONUC for an immediate ceasefire. Since resumption of fighting in August, over 200,000 new IDPs have been created. Accessibility to large parts of Matsisi and Rutshuru are very difficult.

In September, the LRA carried out attacks in Dungu territory along the DRC/Sudan border. The only accessible way of reaching this caseload is through south Sudan and we are discussing operational modalities with our colleagues in South Sudan.

The physical and nutritional condition of IDPs is very worrisome and if urgent action is not taken now, humanitarian calamity will not be averted. The operation needs about **USD46 million up to April 2009.**

4. Situation in Zimbabwe

Mr President, Distinguished Members of the Board, I have informed you about the critical food security situation in Zimbabwe at your annual session in June this year.

The CFSAM has concluded its mission since then and confirmed that the production was equivalent to 28% of previous year's poor performance.. GOZ confirmed to the CFASM mission that it could import about 800,000 MT and the international community expected to provide about 395,000 MT.

It went further to state that more than 3.2 million people will require assistance in October and this figure could rise to 5.1 million or 45% of the population in early 2009. WFP plans to assist around 4 million of these and C-SAFE will provide the balance. This was the subject of the Budget Revision which you kindly approved through correspondence. I would like to reconfirm to you that the food security situation is very critical in many rural areas especially in the worse affected southern districts but also in some districts in the east, centre and NW of the country.

I went to Zimbabwe last week. It is worth saying from the very onset that the country is experiencing a very high inflation rate and a challenging liquidity environment. Officially inflation rate is 231 million percent but unofficially it reported to a billion percent. I visited a WFP distribution site in Buhera District and spoke to monitors, partners and beneficiaries alike. My discussions with Ms Emma Munemo, a WFP beneficiary were very telling indeed. She narrated how the WFP ration represents her only source of food. This will relief her from eating baobab and amarulla which many people are living on now. Many hungry families have exhausted their meager stocks and are reportedly living on one meal a day, exchanging precious livestock for buckets of maize.

Since the suspension of NGOs was lifted on 29 August, WFP has approached all concerned provincial authorities who gave approval for programme implementation.. Training of both WFP and cooperating partner staff have taken place, ward prioritization exercise is completed and registrations have been done in some places followed by distributions. WFP plans to reach about 1.8 million beneficiaries under VGF programme and 600,000 under the safety net programme this month.

Given the nationwide nature of the food shortages, WFP will expand the relief programme to 37 districts – five more than in previous years. C-SAFE will operate in 14 districts.

WFP has strengthened its logistical capacity to cope with this operation. A new transshipment point in the central town of Gweru has been opened and a new warehouse in the South African border town of Musina has been commissioned which has a capacity to bag about 50,000 MT of food over the next 6 months.

WFP has a shortfall of USD 140 million. A pipeline break just at the nick of the lean season in January is imminent if no additional contributions are forthcoming. This will lead to a spike in acute malnutrition rates and trigger a famine.

Cereal prices in South Africa are at their lowest seasonal levels and given the lead time it takes to convert contributions into rations, I strongly appeal for contributions to be made now not only for Zimbabwe operations but for all operations I have just talked about.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to all of you for your generous and continuous support to all OMJ operations.

Thank you Mr President.