

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS LUNCHEON—COSMOS CLUB
REMARKS BY
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(Remarks as prepared for delivery)

I am so pleased to be here today.

For more than four decades, WFP has worked on the front lines of hunger in the deepest fields, bringing food, hope and opportunity to hundreds of millions of the world's hungriest and most vulnerable people. We are mandated, by the United Nations and our Board, to address hunger whenever 5,000 or more refugees are gathered, and to head logistics coordination for the UN system.

I call our staff "the green berets of the humanitarian world." I have a motto for them, "Nothing gets between WFP and a hungry child." Today we feed more than 2 million people in Darfur alone. Our humanitarian logistics network—viewed as the best ever built—ferries 400,000 people in and out of conflict and disaster zones every year on our own humanitarian air service. We run a network of humanitarian response depots, pre-positioning supplies for UN agencies like WHO, bilateral aid agencies and NGOs—allowing a response within 72 hours to any inch of the globe. Our staff have been on the front lines of Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, East Timor, DPRK. You name it. They've helped save hundreds of millions of lives, fueled by the generosity of the American people—who provide close to half WFP's resources in any given year—and many other generous donors.

Today, WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the largest UN agency. We are also arguably the most efficient and effective. We are totally voluntarily funded—we receive no assessed money from UN headquarters, and we restrict our overhead to 7 percent. Ninety-three percent of our resources go directly to support feeding the hungry on the front lines. With our staff of more than 10,000 and a global network of hundreds of ships, planes, helicopters and trucks—and, when needed elephants, mules and camels—we carry out life-saving operations in 80 countries, providing assistance to almost 90 million of the world's hungry each year, more than 80 percent of whom are women and children.

I am deeply moved, humbled and honored by this work.

Ending hunger is perhaps the greatest challenge—and opportunity—of our time.

Hunger and malnutrition are the number one causes of death worldwide. Every five seconds we lose a child to hunger. And hunger is perhaps one of the greatest security

challenges. It has been said there are only seven missed meals between civilization and chaos. I can tell you, when people's children are starving, societies fall apart.

We have made progress. I was born into a world of food aid to Europe. Over four decades, we have seen many nations graduate from severe hunger. We have slightly reduced the proportion of hungry in the world. But with a growing world population, the absolute number of hungry people continues to rise.

Despite the world's advanced technologies, scientific discoveries, and abundance of food and resources we have not yet figured out how to ensure every human has access to this most basic need: food.

My dream is to put WFP completely out of business. Well, almost completely.

Of the more than 850 million people in the world who are seriously hungry at this moment, only about 10 percent are hungry due to natural and human induced catastrophes, according to FAO.

Because our world will always face natural disasters, WFP will continue to be there when all other systems fail and vulnerable populations are threatened by hunger. The American people—through Food for Peace—have been leaders in meeting the needs of emergency hunger. In fact, about half the hungry people who receive food assistance in the world receive it from the US.

The other 90 percent of those 850 million hungry people—or more than 760 million people—suffer from chronic malnutrition and hunger. They—the overwhelming majority of which are women and children—are trapped in what I call “silent crises” or “orphan crises.” We do not necessarily see them on the news, until something creates a tipping point that turns mass hunger into mass starvation and death. So, while we must meet emergency hunger on the front lines, we must also get at the root of chronic hunger.

What is the anatomy of chronic hunger? This is a complex question, but not necessarily a complicated one. Conflict and insecurity are certainly major factors but, hunger's root causes are deeply tied to a lack of access by individuals to the resources they need to produce, sell, and buy food.

The plight of the small-scale African farmer—70 percent of whom are women—is that she bears almost all of the risk, and receives only a small part of the financial benefit of her labors. She has not had access to the inputs, technologies and markets that have revolutionized the lives of farmers over the past few centuries—from Sweden, to Ireland, to the United States, to Brazil, Mexico, Kazakhstan, China, Vietnam, Chile and beyond.

In addition, much of the world simply lacks the capability to move food from an area of abundance, to an area of deficit. Even more basically, whole regions of the world do not know where and when food is available. One village may be starving, while just miles away, another village has harvested food with no identified market. We know that in

many nations, up to half the food supply is lost due to deficits in market information, storage, packaging and transport.

We also know that there are other factors: weak governance, land tenure uncertainty, laws and regulations that oppress small farmers, regional and global trade distortions and high tariffs that impede intra-regional trade. But we also know that many nations have written the book on how to tackle these challenges and have successfully escaped the claws of hunger.

We must take this knowledge and advanced technologies, expanded markets and improved tools, and infuse them into the parts of the world where they are desperately needed.

WFP works alongside our sister UN agencies like FAO and IFAD, and with many excellent NGO partners to address the root causes of hunger. We must try to get ahead of the curve and beat hunger before it strikes. In partnership with governments, we have demonstrated success in doing this in challenging places such as Mozambique and Ethiopia.

In meeting the challenge of hunger on the front lines, we must continually analyze and adjust our strategies in a rapidly changing world. Climate change, soaring demand for biofuels, rising commodity and transportation costs, and conflicts over resources and land, are among the growing challenges facing the world and WFP.

For WFP, climate change is not a theoretical debate. Our operations are on the front lines of climate change, in the most vulnerable areas, where droughts, floods, and disasters are a recurring—and growing—reality, contributing to food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition.

Africa will be hardest hit by climatic changes. In northern Africa, rain-dependent crop yields could be reduced by up to 50 percent by 2020, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international consensus body representing the work of hundreds of scientists. Equally troubling, is the negative effect rising temperatures and dramatic shifts in climate patterns could have on sub-Saharan Africa where 95 percent of agriculture is rain-dependent. The impact on food security could be devastating, and helping farmers adapt is key to mitigating the risks.

While scientists continue to study changing climate patterns, WFP must respond whenever and wherever droughts, floods, cyclones, and hurricanes hit. And such natural disasters have doubled in number in the past decade alone.

Another area that is rapidly changing is the increased use of agricultural production for energy production. Biofuel development presents a tremendous opportunity for many economies, including energy-poor economies and poor farmers. But on the immediate horizon, the world's most vulnerable are faced with the challenge of rising food costs and

the tightest grain markets in memory. At WFP, our cost to purchase grain for the world's hungry has risen an average of 50 percent over the past five years alone.

The rapid growth of major countries like China—where hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty in a few decades, in one of the biggest gains against hunger in human history—has also contributed to unprecedented demand for commodities.

And what emerged from an international conference on food aid held in Berlin in May of this year, was a strong sense that we are entering a post-food surplus disposal world.

To achieve the first Millennium Development Goal—to cut the proportion of the hungry in half by 2015—the world must meet these challenges, make prevention and adaptation a priority for humanitarian assistance, and develop new strategies to address the chronic hunger affecting 90 percent of the world's hungry. We must break the hunger cycle at its roots.

One way to get ahead of the hunger curve is to break the seemingly overwhelming challenge of global hunger into “bite size” pieces.

WFP plays an important role in supporting local agricultural markets through our massive purchasing power. Over the past five years, WFP's business model has changed. We now receive half our contributions in cash, half in commodities. Today, WFP is often one of the largest purchasers—and sometimes the single largest purchaser—of surplus grain in many developing markets. Of WFP's total food procurement, 77 percent is sourced in 70 developing countries—an almost half a billion dollar market for these goods.

The question I have asked is can we use the power of those purchases to help break the cycle of poverty for poor farmers in those nations? Can we, for example, find innovative ways to give a farmer a forward contract that would allow her to access credit, to obtain better seeds and other inputs?

My first trip to the field as executive director was to Ethiopia, our second largest operation in the world. WFP now buys one-third of the food we distribute in Ethiopia locally. I met with grain traders, farmers and officials, to explore new and innovative ways of using WFP's purchasing power and storage and distribution power, to promote development, food security, and supply stability for small African farmers. We are working closely with the Gates Foundation to launch pilots projects in Africa to help ensure our purchases bring direct benefit to small-scale farmers and help break the cycle of hunger at its root. Some of these pilots will connect small-scale farmers to WFP's school feeding programs, which provide more than 20 million children a year with a meal in school.

In my view, school feeding, is one of the most cost-effective and constructive development programs ever designed. At an average of only 10 cents a day or \$20 per year, WFP can provide a child with a cup of food which keeps hunger at bay and serves as a powerful magnet for school attendance.

We also use extra take-home rations targeted for girls only, and with these incentives we dramatically increase their attendance at school. In one of the best and most cost-effective human rights programs I've ever seen, we can totally change the school incentive for around \$30 a year—which translates into about a bottle of vegetable oil per week. Suddenly, fathers are demanding their girls go to school. We have also found that take-home rations provided to HIV/AIDS orphans will not only attract them to school, but help guarantee they have a caregiver. School feeding is also a proven tool in combating child labor.

I have asked WFP what it would cost to ensure that every highly vulnerable school child in a food deficit nation in the world has a cup of food a day? The answer is just over \$1 billion a year—and that should gradually decrease as we have already seen 28 nations graduate from their dependence on WFP support to run their own school-feeding operations

I would like to propose that the world consider making such a life-altering cup of food available to all children in highly vulnerable circumstances. This would provide a safety net for school children that—while it may not end world hunger—would be a giant step toward achieving the Millennium Development Goal One.

The US understands the value of school feeding programs. For decades, the US Government has fed children in schools, and here at home spends tens of billions of dollars annually to ensure no American schoolchild goes without food during the school day.

While congressional action is not yet final, a large bi-partisan group of Members of the House and Senate have come together to expand the US contribution to global school feeding through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

This proposal would guarantee contributions to school feeding. Currently, the McGovern-Dole Program reaches approximately 3 million children per year. The new proposal would triple the number of children reached within five years. This proposed expansion would be accomplished through the Farm Bill. As of last week, this mandatory funding was passed by the House, however it is not yet final in the Senate or by the full Congress. Your vocal support to expand the McGovern-Dole Program through mandatory annual contributions could be very helpful.

Also being considered in the Farm Bill is a proposal that would set aside more than one-third of food aid for development purposes. As I've said previously, WFP strongly supports the use of food aid to assist families working to replant devastated forests, or build irrigation canals or roads to improve a community.

However, we also need to ensure that there are enough resources to address emergencies around the world. Restricting the ability of the US to respond to emergencies could create

a huge void in emergency food operations in places like Darfur, where the US is providing more than 70 percent of all contributions.

In addition, the Administration had proposed providing 25 percent of food assistance in the form of cash, so organizations like WFP could buy food locally, near the area of crisis. We support this concept, as cash gives us the flexibility and speed to respond to emergencies quickly, and also lets us bring poor farmers into the solution. However, while the Administration's proposal did not make it out of the House, I understand a small, cash pilot program may be included by the Senate, which I think, is a positive step.

The reauthorization of the Farm Bill provides an outstanding opportunity to ensure smart and targeted international food assistance, but we need language that is helpful, not hurtful. We are continuing to monitor the bill as the Senate takes it up in September.

I believe that with all of the challenges facing WFP and the international humanitarian community, we also have opportunities to make great progress. We know that the resources and the technology are available; our challenge is to help marshal the will and determination to end hunger.

Sometimes a perfect storm of positive factors come together—a good idea, dedicated people, scientific breakthroughs, newfound resources, political resolve and moral indignation—and we can make major advances in relatively short periods of time.

In his book "The Tipping Point," Malcolm Gladwell calls this type of change a "social epidemic," where change can be contagious and spread quickly through the world. Have we reached the tipping point in our fight against chronic hunger? Can we build a world where every child can strive to realize their potential, freed from the blight of under-nutrition and stunting? I believe we can.

I'm at WFP because I believe, if we continue pushing ourselves to the greatest possibilities, WFP will make an important contribution to the tipping point at which the world could achieve universal freedom from hunger. This is not a dream but is within our reach. Ending global hunger is possible. With the help of all the good forces gathered here today, I am confident we can succeed.

Thank you very much.