



OPENING STATEMENT

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This is a very special moment for us, when I get to say some kind words and praise our outgoing Board President. Ambassador Barbosa is an outstanding diplomat; he has shown us an extraordinary ability to listen, build bridges and bring us to a consensus that we can all rally around. And all of this through one of the most challenging times for global hunger in memory; WFP is a stronger institution for his efforts. I personally appreciate his wise counsel to me and also to members of the Board. Ambassador Barbosa has helped us improve governance, oversight and management of the organization as we undertook record fundraising and record numbers of new hungry people to reach.

Ambassador Barbosa's leadership extended far beyond this boardroom though, as he travelled to various hot spots to see WFP in action and where he interacted with government ministers and beneficiaries alike. For example, he travelled to Sudan, including Darfur and Southern Sudan; Afghanistan including Kabul and Jalalabad; and through Afghanistan he travelled by car crossing the Khyber Pass to Pakistan, to Peshawar and Islamabad. Ambassador Barbosa also represented the WFP Board in New York during the joint Board meetings.

I want to thank Ambassador Barbosa for his leadership and service to this Board and to the world's hungriest people. You have carried on Cape Verde's legendary reputation for producing great diplomats. Thank you Ambassador Barbosa.

First, let me welcome our new President. Let me welcome our new Vice-President, Ambassador Carvalho, and let me welcome the newly elected members of the Board. We have a challenging year in front of us and we are following the

great leadership of Jim Melanson and Ambassador Barbosa, but we have a great new team and I look forward to tackling the challenges ahead of us.

We enter 2009 with a strong WFP, much needed and playing a critical role as the world weathers multiple storms from food to financial. The past year has proven once again that nothing gets between WFP and a hungry child. We, all of us working together, delivered during a year of unprecedented challenge. Not only did we keep the cup full – as we have discussed – for many millions trapped in hunger and reliant on emergency assistance, but we scaled up to meet the urgent requests of nations hit by soaring food prices, food scarcity and food riots. This was perhaps the largest emergency scale up in human history.

I thank the Board, all member nations, our United Nations, NGO, Red Cross, Red Crescent, and other partners, and the staff of WFP for ensuring that these interventions not only reached the hungry but also began deploying a more robust toolbox, one that was informed by the causes of hunger, by the market conditions on the ground and by specific needs of the population. Many of you worked hard for this day. For example, in a testimony to the hard work and commitment of our procurement staff, local purchase from developing countries doubled last year to US\$1.4 billion. Purchase for Progress, designed to ensure these purchases help break the cycle of poverty and hunger for poor farmers, is rolling out in more than 21 nations with many thanks to David Stevenson and the P4P team. In fact, Mozambique – under Ken Davies' leadership – has already launched, as part of the One UN programme, the first P4P programme.

Our policy and programme teams have worked around the clock to deploy targeted cash and voucher programmes where appropriate for populations dealing with hunger that is caused by the inability to afford food. In addition, in the past our primary question was "is the cup full", "are people getting enough kilocalories to survive"? Now we have also begun to ask much more robustly "what is in the in the cup"? This is a critical question that we were unable to fully ask when our primary resource was surplus food. Today all but 2 percent of our food basket is custom ordered, giving us an unprecedented ability to target the right food response for affected populations. So now we can ask: are we getting the most nutritional bang for the buck; is the food targeted appropriately for the population?

Examples of these innovative responses can be found throughout our emergency interventions. In Myanmar, hit by cyclone Nargis, in one village there was food but no one had income to afford it, and 50 cents of cash a day helped them get through the hunger crisis. For Iraqi refugees in Syria there is food and food vouchers to help them be able to make the right choices for their family and for their food needs. In Gaza we found that many families could not cook the wheat because of a lack of cooking fuel, a lack of water, and instead highly fortified date

bars produced in Egypt that we had developed for school children there were a very critical supplement that could be brought in to help ensure children and others were getting vital micronutrients during a very challenging time.

In addition, we were able to work with partners, for example in Gaza with WHO, to help reach hospital staff, doctors and nurses, and patients who had no food with ready to use foods donated from throughout the region. As we discussed in the Management Plan Consultations, these external reforms were matched by powerful reforms internally. These included the first appointment in a United Nations agency of a full time ethics officer and office, Joe Scalise; the establishment of a new and robust office of accountability and results based management, Rebecca Hansen. The imminent launching of IPSAS and the introduction of WINGS II – and I want to thank Amir Abdulla, Eric Whiting, Sean O'Brien, Ernesto Baca, Chris Nikoi, and the entire teams that have been working and all of our country directors and others who have been working through this change.

Let me quote from a letter Philippe Séguin, the Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors, wrote to Secretary-General, Ban Ki moon "IPSAS is the single, most important aspect of United Nations management reform and only WFP would be implementing IPSAS for fiscal year 2008". WINGS II will bring some urgently needed improvements and efficiencies to how we operate in the field; it will improve our financial controls and it will also make our compliance with IPSAS easier. There is considerable interest within the United Nations system in our WINGS II implementation, with the United Nations Secretariat's decision to use the same basic system. Everyone is looking to us to do it well, do it right, and to learn from our experience.

I want to thank all of you for your support and backing as we lead the way in this challenging reform. Here I should mention the heightened attention we are placing on our vulnerability analysis and monitoring – our VAM system – and our capacity there as discussed in the Consultation in January to improve our understanding of how food insecurity translates into hunger and to inform our response. Thanks to the investments from many of you in building this capacity, today nearly 100 percent of our operations are now backed by assessments and analysis. As we speak, food security assessments are underway in Gaza, Kenya and Haiti. We are also continuing to strengthen our assessment tools by incorporating additional market tools such as techniques that help us understand and mitigate the challenge in livelihood patterns as a result of market and climatic shocks; we will continue to keep you posted on these efforts.

More emergencies of greater complexity of course place an ever increasing demand on our specialized logistics knowledge and hard earned access to deliver,

not only for food assistance programmes but also in service to our many United Nations agencies in the broader humanitarian community. Last year we led logistics operations for the United Nations interagency team in seven sudden onset and seven ongoing emergencies, and already this year we are deployed in Gaza to move cargo on behalf of the international humanitarian effort along with leading ongoing logistics clusters operations in Chad, DRC, Haiti, to name just a few. We are providing air support to operations in 16 countries with 130 aircraft, allowing urgent supplies and aid personnel to reach areas otherwise inaccessible due to poor infrastructure or insecurity such as Sudan and Afghanistan. Last year in fact we shipped 3.2 million metric tons of cargo on the high seas and mobilized an international effort to face down pirates off the coast of Somalia in order to allow food to reach people in desperate need. I give my profound thanks to the many nations who have stepped up to the plate to help usher WFP humanitarian ships, including Sweden who is now helping on the high seas. In short, as one global leader said in Davos, no agency inside or outside of the United Nations has greater capacity, capability and willingness for reform and innovation, and I thank our staff for the hard work that all of these efforts represent.

Our goal is to ensure that our response to urgent hunger is as effective and as efficient as possible, drawing on best thinking and best practices from a range of partners and from the communities we serve themselves. We seek to fully establish a transparent learning culture where our policy and programmes are continually informed by evaluations, audits and inspections, followed by adjustments and improvements, and we want to do all of this within a coherent framework of hunger solutions – as embodied in the High Level Task Force chaired by the Secretary-General, Ban Ki moon, and Jacques Diouf. This year we worked in unprecedented partnership across many institutions including the World Bank, FAO, IFAD, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, OCHA, the Red Cross Movement, Red Crescent, and many of the partners that are here joining us today.

Of course we are voluntarily funded – as all of you know all too well – and we cannot do any of this without all of your support and guidance. A perhaps record total of 98 donors supported WFP operations and programmes in 2008, not including private sector donors which also greatly stepped up to the plate. This past year welcomed first time contributors such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Iraq, East Timor, Mali, Nepal, Tanzania and the Republic of Guinea; we thank you. Your efforts are an important sign of solidarity and support for the hungry. We also welcome growing contributions both in treasure and in thought leadership from Argentina, Brazil, India, China and Mexico; I thank you.

Many donors who have been the pillars of WFP over the decades took extraordinary steps to address the food challenge by doubling or even tripling their contributions, including – and I will just list in alphabetical order some –

Australia, Canada (which also fully untied their aid), Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. We welcome the bold and strong commitment to food security in fighting hunger that is evident among the top leaders of the world including the words spoken by President Obama in his inaugural address and Hillary Clinton at the Madrid Food Summit and Prime Minister Zapatero, the Ireland Hunger Task Force, the European Commission's Food Security Fund, just to name a few. And some among you provided contributions as vital, flexible, multilateral contributions in addition to increasing your contributions. We would like to particularly thank those donors: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Saudi Arabia to name a few, that provided multilateral funding which was particularly critical and effective during these times of volatile prices, shifting priorities and market conditions. And in striving for greater predictability we are pleased to have the Russian Federation join the ranks of those providing multi-year funding. All told, together we met historic challenges with record generosity, helping to avoid the worst forms of human suffering and helping stabilize nations rocked by food riots; we thank all of you.

And what of 2009? Let me give a quick overview of the challenges and opportunities we see facing us. I would like to make three points: first, the battle against hunger and undernutrition is winnable; second, we are not out of woods; and third, we must scale up and enact a paradigm shift in our approach to hunger and food insecurity. On the first point, hunger and food production are winnable battles; we can do this. Ensuring adequate access to affordable nutrition does not require new scientific breakthroughs; this is achievable and many nations have achieved it. It is now a matter of political will in dealing with the two frontline issues of hunger: food production and access to adequate nutritious food by each and every person.

Food security is of course non negotiable; if it is neglected we face catastrophe. History shows that without adequate access to food, nations fall, people migrate and millions can die. We must not only produce more food but also protect those who are denied access to it; this is humanity's critical task. Last year we proved our effectiveness as a global community to meet some of this challenge. Nations such as China and India poured millions of dollars into their own food security infrastructures, in addition to the OECD response within their own nations. As I mentioned, last year WFP undertook a huge emergency scale up with a hundred million people reached. The African Union, the World Bank, regional banks, FAO and the entire United Nations system joined with nations and NGO partners and others to respond; we can do this.

Secondly, we are not out of the woods. After decades of progress where we witnessed a halving of the proportion of hungry in the world from 37 percent in

1969 to 17 percent a few years ago, hunger is still back on the march. In just two short years, 115 million people have been added to the ranks of the hungry, totalling nearly one billion, and this new face of hunger is driven by macro factors, the food crisis, the financial crisis and climate change; in short, we are in this together. A new study from Chatham House released last month warns of the coming global food crunch and the *Financial Times* points out that after an easing of global commodity prices, they may be again on the upswing with a 20 percent rise in cereal prices just this past month. Today global grain prices are 13 percent higher than a year ago and 83 percent higher than in 2005, and local market prices in many countries driven by short supply continue to ramp up. For example, maize prices in Malawi are up 116 percent year over year, 66 percent higher in Benin, rice prices have soared 11 percent in Senegal since 1 October and are rising 3 percent a month in Niger. But as we respond to the urgent calls for hunger interventions in places such as Zimbabwe, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Darfur, Haiti and the Horn of Africa, Gaza, we must factor in the underlying fault lines in the food systems, realizing that the world's nervousness about food security can be both a cause of volatility as well as response.

For example, Philippines' Agricultural Minister, Arthur Yap, in a statement at the high level meeting on Food Security For All in Madrid, raised the alarm that stocks to use ratios are at 30 year lows. He called this the calm before the storm, urging measures such as calling on WFP to consider emergency food stocks for nations, to install a level of certainty and stability. As Prime Minister Zapatero pointed out in Madrid, the financial crisis is compounding the plight of the hungry as family incomes are cut, further marginalizing those who live on less than a dollar or two a day. Andrew Natsios, the former head of USAID, in an article released last month entitled "The Coming Food Coups" writes that "though it is unlikely famine will sweep across the globe causing revolution, upheaval and mass starvation, the consequence of the increase in food prices since 2004 could still be dire if prices continue to increase and a severe worldwide recession drastically reduces family income in developing countries."

For WFP there are five factors we are watching as early signs, signals in the financial crisis for the effect on the most vulnerable. The first is dependence on remittances. As the global economy slows so do remittances sent home from workers abroad and their families; this is already hitting hard. For example 27 percent of Kyrgyzstan's GDP is made up of remittances and with the dramatic slowdown of those remittances from their family members working in the region 600,000 have been thrown into urgent hunger. The government has requested WFP to come back for the first time since 1992 with an emergency intervention. For nations such as Haiti and those in Central America, with an average percentage of 25 percent of GDP dependent on remittances, and Africa which received 15 billion in remittances, this will be critical.

The second factor we are looking at is export dependence; remember last year the focus was on food import dependence. Well in addition to that the export dependence is a critical variable. In this time of economic difficulty, dependence on export is creating a new kind of vulnerability. As exports slow so do incomes in poor countries. The IMF estimates that sub Saharan Africa exports will decline by half in 2009, cutting off a vital source of employment, income and foreign capital.

Likewise, the third factor of growing unemployment and poverty threatens to push the working poor into the ranks of the hungry poor. The ILO estimates that the number of working poor people who are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the two dollar per person per day poverty line may rise to 1.4 billion this year or 45 percent of the world's employed.

The fourth factor we are looking at is investment and access to credit. In an editorial last week entitled "Barter Beware", the *Financial Times* warns that many nations are entering in a "secretive web of barter deals as a substitute for global commodity markets" because financing for the international food trade is drying up or becoming too expensive. Some report they cannot get lines of credit to buy food for their nations.

And the fifth area concerns access to adequate supplies. We are beginning again to see nations shutting down food exports as many have just done in West Africa to ward off food inflation and protect supply. Others are importing more and many trying to rebuild depleted stocks; there is again the spectre of hoarding. Once again we must ask ourselves if we are witnessing a fundamental breakdown in some aspects of the global food markets where nations cannot be sure that they can secure enough supply or the access to credit to fund the purchases they need.

To address these critical challenges requires the highest level attention from presidents, prime ministers, kings, queens, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the leaders of many institutions. The G8 hosted by Italy this year, the G20 and others must and are planning to keep food security high on their agenda. We join the call for a portion of stimulus packages to be spent on food security as the Secretary-General and Bob Zoellick have called for. We must not – as we worry about Wall Street and Main Street – forget those places with no streets; but we must also not be discouraged. Last year we did not prove our impotence but our effectiveness. Your investment helped reach millions and stabilized nations that were hit with the food riots. This attests to the fact that we can get this job done and many millions of farmers were reached with additional fertilizer and seeds through efforts of IFAD, FAO and many of the NGOs here today with us.

There is probably no issue I take more seriously than safety of our staff. WFP staff, along with all other humanitarian workers, faces increasingly serious threats

to their safety in many parts of the world. Insecurity continues to adversely affect WFP staff, safety and operations in Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, DRC, Sri Lanka and other countries. In 2008 a total of 14 WFP staff lost their lives; 26 were wounded and 44 abducted or detained while in the line of duty, while working for WFP. Since we met last October, WFP lost two more national staff members in Somalia: Mr Ibrahim Duale and Mr Mohamud Omar Moallim were killed by unidentified gunmen in separate attacks at food distribution sites in January 2009. These killings have brought to four the number of WFP staff killed in Somalia just since August 2008.

Our staff are most vulnerable in conflict and post conflict areas; they have been victims of targeted abuse, abduction, harassment and unlawful detention. Of major concern is the large number of security incidents targeting our contractors and partners whose services are most critical for sustaining WFP operations in many areas. In 2008 alone, seven drivers of WFP contracted trucks were shot and killed in banditry attacks in Sudan, five in south Sudan and two in Darfur, and five employees of contracted transport companies, four drivers and one agent, were killed in banditry attacks in Somalia. Two WFP implementing partner staff members were killed last year while providing service to WFP, one in Somalia and one in Sudan.

2008 was another harsh year for United Nations staff around the world. In Gaza two drivers lost their lives while trying to deliver food in a war zone, one was working for WFP and one for UNRWA. Humanitarian NGOs also continue to lose dozens of workers to malicious acts. As noted by the Secretary-General Ban Ki moon, the security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel continues to deteriorate. He expressed concern over the wide scale of threats and the rise in debilitating targeting of humanitarian and United Nations staff. We fully support his call for international collective responsibility and closer collaboration between the United Nations and host governments to ensure safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations staff.

The safety of WFP and other operational agencies will be a paramount issue I raise as I assume chairmanship of the High Level Committee on Management this year. WFP is one of the agencies that go into countries along with other humanitarian workers as it gets more difficult; these dangers and hardships our staff face are considerable.

Speaking of staff, today we have a sad goodbye and some new welcomes to announce. Today I want to pay special tribute, I am stuttering already, to John Powell, who is leaving WFP after 19 years of hard work, dedication and great accomplishment. I call John our happy warrior. John has been one of WFP's

outstanding leaders, helping steer the world's great humanitarian food organization across two transformative decades and into the twenty-first century.

John joined WFP in 1990 as Regional Manager of the Asia and Pacific Bureau after serving at the World Bank and for 25 years in the Australian Government. His global insight and experience were a significant resource to WFP as the agency responded to a surge to natural and man-made disasters. Throughout this decade John went on to a series of demanding roles in both policy and operations. He was Director of the Strategy and Policy Division, Country Director in Pakistan, Regional Manager of the West and Central Asia Bureau and Regional Director of the Asia and Eastern Europe Bureau and, of course, our Deputy Executive Director for Resource and External Relations. To each of these posts he brought the quick thinking and foresight needed to overcome the difficulties of delivering life-saving assistance when the emergency alarm is ringing. For John the frontline was always the most important place and the people we serve. He was noted for saying in almost every meeting "WFP works for the hungry poor and the hungry poor we must help are not in Rome so let us get moving".

As the founding Director of Asia Bureau, John created a deep imprint on the region, launching smart and original initiatives in programming, fundraising and public advocacy. One of his many accomplishments was to transform a million tons of wheat generously donated by the Government of India into nutritious biscuits for schoolchildren in Afghanistan – a great forefront of the ready-to-use food for emergencies drive that we are in. At the same time he was successfully managing major emergencies in North Korea, Pakistan and Afghanistan. John's solid foundation for the Asia Bureau is a cornerstone of his legacy to WFP.

Everyone who has worked for John has witnessed his uncanny ability to see straight through complex issues to the strategic resolution at their heart. But as I mentioned, he is perhaps most beloved for his unflagging cheerfulness, his empathy, camaraderie and above all his marvellous sense of humour. This is much needed in our line of work. One of the most well-read people, John is famous for his word play and witticisms. As staff all over the world have written to tell us, John is both inspiring and fun to work with. His trademark greeting, "Hi, Smiley", is guaranteed to brighten your day and while he may be one of the most eloquent speakers in WFP, when he is talking informally he can mystify his listeners with his Australian slang, cricket metaphors, references to obscure literary characters and circular approach to the story. Once when a staff member heard John give the speech at a going-away party, she enquired, does he come with subtitles?

John is also known for his enthusiasm for travelling and passion for antique hunting. He is believed to have the world's largest private samovar collection,

along with a multiplicity of brass pots that no one can figure out what he puts use to.

John, you are leaving us, but you are leaving us on the highest of notes. In fact, the highest note ever for fundraising and external relations. In 2008, your donor resourcing team raised over US\$5 billion to fight hunger. What a way to leave. You have been a true champion of all the people you have worked for and all who have worked for you. We will miss you, our happy warrior.

As you know, I like musical goodbyes and when Jean-Jacques left it was very appropriate for some reason to bring in a bagpipe piper, and John, I have been thinking what would be most appropriate to mark your goodbye. And John really is someone whose heart is in the field and whose heart is on every continent of this world. So I have found a special video called "Playing for Change" and you will see musicians from throughout the world playing together to form one note of music with a song that I think captures who John is, called "Stand by Me". Think of all of those hungry children who when they looked up and they were so urgently desperate, there was someone like John Powell, someone like all of us in this room, that was willing to stand by them. So John, in tribute to you in music, "Stand by Me".

(Screening of video)

John, you do not get to say anything yet. We are going to ask Ambassador Vanstone to say a few words from the country you have not had a chance to spend too much time in recent years but will be returning to, to fish and antique shop. First let me present you, on behalf of WFP and all the staff, our champion in the battle against hunger award, John Powell.

Just a few more moments and I want to thank Porter Anderson and Nancy Roman for enacting my vision of a beautiful tribute to John. Thank you, John.

Madam Sisulu and I are getting very lonely and I am pleased to announce that after a global search that many of you participated in, and I thank you very much for putting forward candidates for the Deputy Executive Director slots, plus we advertised broadly to ensure that we chose the best qualified individuals, and we put together a panel that included and was led by Dr Akinwumi Adesina, Vice President of AGRA from Nigeria; Thoraya Obaid, the Executive Director of UNFPA from Saudi Arabia; Tony Gutierrez, High Commissioner for Refugees from Portugal; Under-Secretary-General, DFS, Susana Malcorra from Argentina. After a review of the panels and narrowing down many dozens of candidates through a very difficult process and many qualified candidates, I would like to announce a selection of DEDs that have been approved as necessary in

consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of FAO.

First, I would like to announce María Eugenia Casar as DED for budget and finance. María Casar is from Mexico. She currently serves as Treasurer of Mexico. Many of you may know because in one stint of duty here in 2004 through 2006 she served as CFO for WFP. She has a very distinguished background and is considered one of the best public finance professionals in the world. We are very, very pleased, given the challenges before us and the extensive work we have to do in the finance and budget areas, for her to join an excellent team we have here to help lead us through this next effort.

I would also like to announce our new DED for external affairs and fundraising, who will attempt to fill John's very ample shoes that he is leaving behind, Staffan de Mistura. Staffan is of dual citizenship, Italy and Sweden, and he is currently serving in Iraq as the Secretary-General's Special Representative. He is overseeing, in extremely difficult circumstances there, in Baghdad, over 1,000 staff. He oversaw the elections that just took place as well as reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance. Staffan has served in many capacities in the United Nations, including Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq previously, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon and Director of the United Nations Information Centre. He has also served in Kosovo, Somalia, Bosnia, Croatia, Tirana and Sudan.

I am very pleased to announce that we have tapped one of our own from many excellent candidates internally. Amir Abdulla has agreed to take on the role of DED, as Chief Operating Officer. Amir is familiar to everyone in this room serving with great distinction as our CFO and Director of Finance and Legal Division. Amir is Sudanese and has been with WFP since 1980, serving in many positions. He has worked in South Africa, Egypt, Angola with WFP and has worked in Sudan prior to his time with our agency. Perhaps appropriately he has worked on his family farm in Sudan, giving him an even more in depth understanding of how to bridge the gap between our work and FAO, IFAD's and our other partners. Amir is one of our outstanding leaders and we look forward to him serving as DED.

I will mention two other important, very critical roles, Ramiro Lopes da Silva, one of the great humanitarian leaders in the world, will serve as Deputy COO and make a critical part of this team. Ramiro's leadership in the Horn of Africa right now is particularly critical. He may be the world's great expert on the challenges facing the Horn of Africa, and particularly right now with the prolonged droughts and stress in the region.

I would also like to announce that Staffan de Mistura, given his critical role in Iraq, cannot join us until 1 July. I have asked Manuel Aranda da Silva to serve in an acting role in that critical position. He is currently my senior adviser and chairman of the Operating Committee and is an outstanding humanitarian leader and we are fortunate to have him. He is currently helping to lead the UN's reform of the security apparatus. He is a citizen of Mozambique and has served with the United Nations for more than two decades including being Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan. Again, I want to thank all of you who put forward really excellent candidates. You always know a great search when it is so difficult to put together the right team with the right balance with the right geographic reach but I want to thank all of you and I ask you to join me in welcoming this new team.

Please keep your cards up. I just overlooked in all the announcements we had one that is very special to us which is that the former President of Ghana, President Kufuor has agreed to serve as WFP Ambassador against hunger and we are very, very pleased. He is already planning to make sure that we can raise the understanding of this and I think Ghana's leadership on hunger and its track record of getting on track to the MDG of cutting hunger in half will make him a very special part of the WFP family.