

Executive Director's Remarks, as delivered
for World Food Day, 17 October 2011

Today, I would like to thank our leaders. Leaders who have fought against hunger;

- of course Mr. Jacques Diouf,
- Michelle Bachelet, who is Chile's own architect of the revolution against malnutrition,
- President Nwanze, of IFAD,
- Italy, our dear host nation, and
- Mr. José Graziana da Silva, Director-General Elect of FAO and a key architect of Brazil's Zero Hunger Programme.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, as former Brazil President Lula said just last week, 'Hunger is a weapon of mass destruction, the deadliest we know. We need leaders who will tackle hunger, and stand with life.'

Indeed, the coalition of leaders determined to end hunger and malnutrition is gathering momentum. On this World Food Day, I dedicate my remarks to those leaders.

As we gather today, perhaps the most challenging time for the world's hungry in decades, a perfect storm of volatility, severe weather, financial contraction, rising prices, and, in some areas, conflict and instability continue to challenge our shared hope of ending hunger.

- But, we know that ending hunger is not only about hope, but also about hard work.
- Ending hunger is not only about compassion, but commitment.
- Ending hunger is not only about dreams, but about discipline.
- Ending hunger is not only about action but accountability.
- Ending hunger is not only about good programmes, but political will and leadership.

And make no mistake—when these elements come together—hunger and malnutrition go into retreat.

On this World Food Day, we must honour the nations that are turning the tide against hunger, from Brazil to Ghana, from Cape Verde to China, from Chile to India, from Mexico, and from Ethiopia to Kenya and Uganda—where 4.5 million faced with a devastating drought and high food prices have not joined the emergency ranks because they are on productive safety nets.

We must honour those nations who have proven, despite financial pressures, that they will continue to stand against hunger and fight beyond borders as they have for more than half a century—from the nations in Europe and the European Commission, to Japan, Australia, Canada, and my own nation—the United States of America.

Make no mistake, this is hard work.

And in the past few years, we have seen many additional nations contributing their treasure to help the hungry beyond their own borders—from Saudi Arabia to UAE, from Brazil to Russia and China—and when harvests allow—Thailand, Malawi, and beyond.

They are not only contributing to feeding the hungry, but sharing their knowledge and practices. We must honour their actions. We must also never forget that fighting hunger and malnutrition is about peace and stability. It makes economic sense.

No nation, region, or organisation can win the battle against hunger alone. It is ‘all hands to the wheel’—from the UN to G20, to private sector to NGOs, to food scientists and agriculture researchers, to farmers themselves—we must stand together.

Nothing short of radical collaboration will turn the tide against hunger. And we must honour those who are suffering right now on the front lines of hunger. Because as we gather, tens of thousands of

children are facing starvation in southern Somalia. Make no mistake; this is not the failure of aid—but the lack of access to aid. For while we cannot prevent this drought, famine is preventable.

But even this tide can be turned.

I would like you to meet Sadak. I met Sadak in Somalia this July. His mother, like many thousands of others, had travelled for weeks on foot to get access to food. Many mothers reported being forced to leave their children along the way as they were too weak to continue. Fifteen month old Sadak was dangerously weak, his feet were swelling as he entered stage four malnutrition. He had perhaps days to live. But hope came, as the world supported WFP's air lift of this life saving nutritious food—developed by WFP with Indian and Pakistani food technologists and produced locally in Pakistan and soon in Ethiopia – that made the difference between life and death.

Just a few weeks ago, we asked our team to check on Sadak. Here is the picture they sent.

Let Sadak inspire us as to what can be done—even when all hope seems lost—when we stand together. Thank you.