

World Food Day ceremony

Monday, October 16, 2023

Speaking time – 3 minutes

Presidents.

Ministers.

My very good friends Qu and Alvaro.

Excellencies.

Ladies and gentlemen.

It's an honor to join you to mark World Food Day.

Our theme this year reminds us that water and food security are fundamentally linked.

Access to sufficient water is essential to grow and produce food.

But climate change and environmental degradation are playing havoc with this vital,

yet fragile,

relationship.

More frequent droughts degrade agricultural lands and destroy farmers' crops.

Water scarcity can also stoke instability,

as communities compete for increasingly rare resources.

Tragically, the climate crisis is plunging more people into hunger and despair each year.

It's just one of the drivers of an unparalleled global hunger crisis,

also being fueled by conflict,

and economic turmoil.

Hundreds of millions of people do not know when, or if, they will eat again.

As a result,

demand for the World Food Programme's assistance is rising relentlessly.

But just as needs are at record levels,

funding for vital humanitarian and development programs is drying up.

In recent months,

WFP has been forced to make the agonizing decision to cut rations,

for tens of millions of vulnerable people.

Nearly half of our 86 country operations have already reduced –

or plan to reduce –

the size and scope of our food and cash programs.

This includes major humanitarian emergencies,

such as Afghanistan,

Syria,

Yemen,

and the Sahel region of West Africa.

This is our new operating environment –
our new normal.

And it's happening right across the UN and the
wider humanitarian system.

In these exceptional times,

it's more important than ever,

that we invest in programs which address the root
causes of hunger,

including climate change.

At WFP,

we run community-driven resilience programs,

which restore degraded lands,

build irrigation and water storage systems,

and help protect local food systems.

We also run early warning programs,

which help vulnerable communities prepare for extreme weather before it hits.

And we help smallholder farmers access insurance to protect their crops against droughts,

and other climate disasters.

But no one can do this alone.

So we're also working closely with our sister
Rome-based Agencies,

coordinating our programs,

globally and on the ground,

to ensure they achieve maximum impact.

And we're fully committed to working with all of
you.

Excellencies:

it's not too late to halt the relentless growth in
humanitarian needs,

and build the resilience of the most food insecure
communities.

With determination,
innovation,
and above all cross-sectoral collaboration,
we can –
and we must –
rise to this collective challenge,
and collaborate to bring new hope to vulnerable
people around the world.

Thank you.

END