

Horn of Africa Meeting at FAO

- Director-General Diouf, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all I want to thank FAO and Director-General Mr. Jacques Diouf for bringing us all together today. It's been a little less than a month since many of us were here last, committing to help those starving and suffering in the Horn of Africa.
- A lot has happened in that month. Food has been mobilized into the region – by plane, ship and truck. Feeding centers have been set up – some in areas in Somalia previously inaccessible to humanitarian workers. We have brought in staff, including nutritionists. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been generously donated.
- But, for those of us who have been there can testify, and all of us have so painfully witnessed in news reports and photographs, a lot more must be done.
- And, as the drought deepens and the crisis worsens, time – an especially for the very young and vulnerable – is not on our side. Too many young children, already weakened by prolonged malnutrition are dying and, tragically, those who survive may suffer permanent mental and physical impairment.
- We are using every tool at our disposal, including food specially targeted to protect the minds and bodies of children, and every window of opportunity, to reach people wherever we can.
- I will be honest with you. Saving lives – especially in places like Somalia – is not easy. We need to mobilize thousands of tons of food. Food is valuable and in Somalia, a place where pirates have ruled the seas and lawlessness has outlasted countless

- I want to assure you that WFP has a zero tolerance for divergence. Our goal is that every ounce of donated food reaches its intended beneficiary. When we hear of food gone astray we investigate and if wrong-doing is found, we take immediate corrective measures.
- There is risk in being in Somalia. We will do everything in our power to minimize that risk, but we count on all of you – our member states to stand behind us in this historic response. Because the greater risk is not being there for the most vulnerable.
- While it is imperative to save lives in the short run, and mobilize resources to do so, we must not forget that we have seen this cycle of hunger and malnutrition, and even starvation before.
- While the drought may be the worst in 60 years, the situation today is not the same as it was in 1984, when 1 million died in Ethiopia alone. That is because nations, supported by international agencies like FAO, WFP, Unicef and others, have built resiliency.
- This drought shows how much can be achieved by putting in place effective hunger safety nets, by strengthening smallholder and also pastoralist livelihoods, and by linking enhanced agricultural production with increased market opportunities - especially for smallholder farmers. The success of these programs in Uganda, Ethiopia and beyond is a hopeful sign that future droughts need not result in the tens of thousands of deaths that we saw in earlier decades.
- I want to commend the significant efforts being made by national and regional frameworks and strategies, especially the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

led by the New Partnership for Africa's Development. We need to further invest in risk management, disaster risk reduction, capacity building, direct interventions to address chronic hunger and malnutrition while working simultaneously to secure a stable food supply.

- Regional organizations are crucial for mobilizing concerted action against threats to food and nutrition security, the African Union and the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in particular, have an important role to play. WFP remains committed to supporting the implementation of national strategies, associated investment plans and a regionally-driven forward-looking effort to develop a new dynamic for addressing food and nutrition insecurity in the region.
- The Plan of Action for the Horn of Africa developed by WFP, FAO and Oxfam in February 2010 is one such effort designed to integrate humanitarian and longer-term development efforts in a comprehensive approach through existing entities and structures. The plan is complimentary with the Comprehensive Framework for Action agreed by member agencies of the High-Level Task Force on the Food Security Crisis (HLTF), led by the UN Secretary-General. It is also in line with already agreed principals, the Rome World Summit on Food Security in November 2009, and the AU/NEPAD CAADP process.
- But we have had plans before. To succeed where others have failed, we need to ensure strong regional and national ownership.
- Norman Borlaug once said, "Man can and must prevent the tragedy of famine in the future instead of merely trying with

pious regret to salvage the human wreckage of the famine, as he has so often done in the past.”

- We must seize this opportunity to break the cycle of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa and make sure that this is the last generation to be robbed of a future through the scourge of hunger and malnutrition. We know what must be done and how governments can be supported to take action.
- Harnessing the power of regional institutions and partnerships, national initiatives, political will and international commitment, we can break this cycle by building household resilience, protect productive assets and put in place measures to avoid a similar crisis when rain inevitably fails in the future.
- Thank you.