

**16 December 2008**

## **WFP CALLS FOR RESCUE PACKAGE FOR THE WORLD'S HUNGRY**

ROME -- The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today urged countries to step up and allocate to urgent hunger needs a fraction of what is proposed for financial rescue packages to address the global economic downturn.

“We need to send a bold signal of hope to the world with a human rescue package,” said Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, speaking from New Delhi during her first visit to India, the country with the single largest population of undernourished people in the world. “As we take care of Wall Street and Main Street, we can’t forget the places that have no streets,” she said, referring to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s challenge to political leaders.

WFP – which aims to feed nearly 100 million of the world’s hungriest people in 2009 - announced today that it will start the New Year needing US\$5.2 billion for urgent hunger needs. Without a rapid injection of funds, millions of people in Haiti, the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya and other hunger hot spots will run out of food assistance by the end of March, when warehouse stocks run out. WFP is voluntarily funded, and relies on annual contributions for all of its programmes.

Sheeran said that with a mere 1 percent of what has been tabled for financial rescue packages and stimulus packages in the United States and Europe, developed countries could fully fund the work of the World Food Programme, and make a mark toward meeting other urgent hunger needs, for example feeding all 59 million hungry school children worldwide (\$3 billion per year) and the establishment of a reserve fund for fast acquisition of food stocks for emergencies. Funds are also needed to boost the agricultural production of small-holder farmers who have seen the price of seeds and fertilizers more than double since 2006.

“World leaders need to be confronted with the values implicit in the policy choices they are making,” Sheeran said. “The world is poised to produce trillions for financial rescue packages. What will they produce for the human rescue?”

WFP’s urgent call comes off the back of historically high food prices, followed by continued market volatility. The global financial crisis, which is enveloping the developed world, is spilling into the developing world as incomes are affected, and trade, capital flows and remittances slow. This

month, the Kyrgyz government asked WFP to help feed 600,000 people pushed into desperate hunger following a sharp decline in the remittances which account for 20 percent of the country's GDP.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced last week that another 40 million people have been pushed into hunger this year primarily due to high food prices, bringing the total number of hungry to nearly 1 billion worldwide. This increase comes after four decades of progress when the international community collectively helped to bring down the percentage of hungry people from 37 to 17.

Sheeran noted that hunger can lead to civil unrest as witnessed in Haiti, where people were killed and a prime minister was driven from office when food prices soared earlier this year. There were riots in dozens of other countries around the world.

"We are at a critical juncture where we risk watching hunger spiral out of control as the world's population is set to climb toward 9 billion mid-century," Sheeran said, adding the effects of hunger during a child's earliest years prevents them from reaching their full intellectual and physical capacity.

"We can't afford to lose the next generation," she said.

#### MAJOR WFP OPERATIONS FOR 2009 (12):

Country	Estimated N. of Beneficiaries (millions)	WFP Operational Requirements (\$ in millions)
Afghanistan	8.82	275
Bangladesh	5.00	112
Chad	0.69	185
DPRK	5.58	346
DRC	2.73	258
Ethiopia	8.67	633

Haiti		1.40	76
Kenya		1.64	187
Somalia		2.58	403
Sudan		5.95	851
Uganda		1.92	189
Zimbabwe		3.98	276
Needs for 12 countries		49.0	3,791
Total Needs for 2009		98	5,200

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions. Next year, WFP aims to feed 98 million people in 77 countries.

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For more information please contact (email address: [firstname.lastname@wfp.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@wfp.org)):

Gregory Barrow, WFP/Rome, Tel. +39-06-65132330, Mobile: +39-3481325018, (ISDN line available)

Caroline Hurford, WFP/London, + 44 20 7240 9001, Mobile: + 44 7968 008474

Emilia Casella, WFP/Geneva, + 41 22 917 8564, Mobile: + 41 792 857304

Jennifer Parmelee, WFP/Washington, Tel. +1-202-6530010 ext. 1149, Mobile: +1-202-4223383

Bettina Luescher, WFP/New York, Tel. +1-212-9635196, Mobile: +1-646-8241112, [luescher@un.org](mailto:luescher@un.org)