



Remarks by Mr. John Powell,
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ECOSOC Operational Segment
“Dialogue with UNDG Executive Heads”
11 July 2008

**“Implementation of the MDGs in the current global environment:
Meeting the challenges of MDG1 - hunger and poverty”**

When governments and partners convened at the end of this century, it was clear that concerted action was needed to propel us to the ideals of reducing human suffering and ensuring that we would overcome global hunger. We pledged that, first and foremost, by 2015 we would cut the proportion of hungry people by half.

Although some countries have been on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal on hunger (Ghana, Chile, Brazil and Vietnam, to name a few), we are now midway to 2015 and numbers are rising again due to a confluence of factors. We face a global malnutrition crisis where one in every three children in the developing world is stunted, and the effects of the global food crisis are felt by a swelling number of people. More than 850 million people already spend more than half – and sometimes substantially more than that – of their income on food; they may not have enough to eat in order to lead productive lives. We are losing precious time. We know that if a child suffers from silent hunger – with inadequate nutrition in the first two years of life – she or he is mentally and physically disadvantaged for life, and unable to benefit from development efforts related to education and health.

New events have changed the landscape. Food prices have reached unprecedented heights, threatening to push millions already living on the brink into poverty, again underlining that poverty and hunger go hand-in-hand. Marginalized people are the earliest and most deeply affected. They are the ones least able to cope when food prices rise rapidly and disposable family income declines. They have smaller meals, fewer meals and less nutritious meals. They are very quickly affected by greater poverty and

malnutrition, and form a “new face of hunger”. People living on \$2 a day are denied their futures as they forego education and health care in order to afford basic food. Those subsisting on \$1 a day give up proteins and dietary supplements such as vegetables, bringing them closer to the brink of nutritional and health risks. The approximately 160 million people surviving on 50 cents a day have no choices other than to cut down on their food intake. All of this puts achievement of not only MDG1, but all of the MDGs, at greater risk, setting us back from gains made during earlier years.

Concurrently, those of us providing food to the poorest and most marginalized people see the costs of food soar while global food stocks dwindle, making it more difficult to procure commodities. When disasters strike, limited food stocks are even less available to support sustainable development programs. WFP can reach fewer vulnerable people, with immediate negative impacts on their lives, and risks to their livelihoods and futures.

Given sufficient resources, WFP is able to scale up work with governments and partners including, for example, UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO, WHO, and numerous international and local NGOs. Safety net operations such as school feeding, general food distribution and therapeutic feeding provide lifelines allowing people to improve their lives. We have tools to reach children under the age of two, and to alleviate acute malnutrition crises over a relatively short period of time. We have experience using cash and voucher interventions.

Regional structures and organizations such as the African Union, regional economic commissions in Latin America and Asia, and others are also addressing long-term solutions. The countries of the African Union, through NEPAD, have committed up to 10 percent of their GDP to agriculture.

The Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank earlier this week characterized the challenges to achieving internationally agreed development goals by saying that the world faces not one, but three simultaneous crises: a food crisis; a climate crisis; and a development crisis – all three are deeply interconnected. Progress towards the MDGs is being derailed, particularly in Africa, because of this triple threat. To accelerate progress in Africa, the Secretary-General created a Steering Group that has produced a set of practical, costed recommendations to achieve the MDGs in Africa, endorsed by the African Union and member states, with a proposed scaling up of investments accompanied by renewed leadership. Short, medium and longer term targets and actions are required. Immediate food needs must be met with safety nets and programmes such as school feeding, mother and child

nutrition, food for work, and conditional cash transfers to get nutritious food and cash quickly to the neediest people. A second step would be to give small farmers, especially in Africa, access to seeds, fertilizers and other basic inputs, in order to boost agricultural yields, while a third step should be to ease export bans and restrictions. The MDG Steering Group's recommendations make reference to the global partnerships needed to address the full range of MDGs, including health, education, infrastructure and trade, environmental sustainability and the role of gender and aid effectiveness.

With recognition that a coordinated response is the best means for addressing the global food crisis, the Secretary-General's High Level Task Force brings together all relevant partners of the UN system including funds and programmes, UN specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods Institutions. The key to the comprehensive framework for action will be close partnership at country level between national governments, the UN system, civil society and private sector and other actors, with the UN Country Team having a significant role in supporting governments in their efforts.

Collaboration with partners is critical to addressing the MDGs in the current global environment. In addition to the Secretary-General's Task Forces, there are many opportunities to collaborate at country level with government and other partners. This is where the UNDG structure and partnerships are of particular value. For example, WFP and UNICEF have recently collaborated in 64 countries on 127 projects, primarily in MDG areas such as education, nutrition, and mother and child health - using tools and approaches created through the UN Development Group.

The TCPR, and the coordinating umbrella of the UNDG, provide policy direction and tools for effective partnerships at country and regional levels. Coordinated problem analysis, joint programming through the UNDAF framework, a cohesive team with a range of expertise working in collaboration with national governments, use of national systems to promote aid effectiveness as outlined in the Paris Declaration, monitoring and coordinated advocacy and communication developed as appropriate to country circumstances and supported by simplified and harmonized approaches starting at headquarters and regional levels - all contribute to strengthened and results-focused actions. WFP continues to use the UNDAF as its development programming framework and has increased its participation in joint programmes from 46 in 2006 to 84 in 2007, to strengthen response to development challenges.

In Mozambique, WFP leads the UN Food Security Working Group encompassing relevant Government ministries, FAO, IFAD, NGOs and the bilateral donor group on agriculture. A primary activity is the UN joint programme called Building Commodity Value Chains and Market Linkages for Farmers' Associations. This helps local farmers maintain or increase sustainable food production and delivery. In the United Republic of Tanzania, joint programs include "Managing Transition from Humanitarian to Sustainable Development", and "Strengthening National Disaster Preparedness and Response Capacity". Elsewhere – for example in Rwanda, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt, Guatemala and Colombia – joint programmes focus on sustainable growth and breaking chronic malnutrition, alleviating poverty, building livelihoods and mechanisms to avert or cope with disaster, and supporting national education systems. These responses linked to UNDAF result areas are often coordinated through UNDAF Theme Groups, for example food security, to strengthen linkages between food security, nutrition, education and other focus areas of the MDGs.

During the recent years of reform of the United Nations' operational activities, reflection with partners has led us, within the undg, to conclude that we can achieve the greatest substantive results and reach the most people, when we rally together around a vision of what can be achieved through coherent and collegial teamwork. That vision is reflected in the UNDAF results matrices, in country-level thematic groups, and in support to national planning and policy processes.

In conclusion:

1. WFP and our undg partners recognize that the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration provide a framework for substantive outcomes. The benchmark should always be whether collaboration contributes to making poor people's lives better.
2. A strengthened response to the global food crisis addresses not only MDG1 and the global hunger and poverty emergency; it also addresses inter-linkages that imperil achievement of other MDGs.
3. WFP asks support of the Secretary-General's call to maintain a sense of urgency on the global food crisis, recognizing its far-reaching impact on sustainable development.
4. We seek your support in efforts to ensure increases in Official Development Assistance to address hunger.

Together we can make a difference in addressing the "new face of hunger" in order to focus on longer term sustainable development, rising to the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Declaration.