



WFP Statement to the 150th Session of the WHO Executive Board January 2022

Chair, Honourable Delegates, Director-General,

The World Food Programme (WFP) would like to applaud the World Health Organization (WHO) for tirelessly working to support vulnerable communities and countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The world is facing an unprecedented global health and humanitarian emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic is having an enormous socio-economic impact, making the poorest poorer, and the hungriest hungrier, pushing millions of people into acute food insecurity and driving up rates of malnutrition.

A perfect storm of conflict, climate crises, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the rapid and unprecedented expansion in needs over the last year. Global hunger continues to rise at an alarming rate: our latest estimates show up to 283 million people across 80 countries (where WFP has a presence) are experiencing extreme levels of acute hunger. This represents an increase of around 110 percent compared to 2019.

In 2021, over half a million people are estimated to have experienced famine like conditions. Today we are particularly concerned about 45 million people in 43 countries who are one step away from the same fate. Unimpeded emergency food assistance is urgently required to avert starvation.

When COVID-19 first started disrupting travel – closing borders, grounding planes and bringing transport systems to a halt – WFP leveraged its logistics capacity and expertise to form the backbone of the global humanitarian and health response. Today, in line with the Director General's call to action to better deliver COVID-19 tools to the most vulnerable, WFP remains ready to support governments, WHO and other partners deliver lifesaving commodities to the last mile should there be a need and we be requested to do so.

WFP also stands in solidarity with health and humanitarian workers around the globe and supports the global call for vaccine equity as a means to both ending this pandemic and reducing COVID-19 related impacts that have driven food insecurity.

WFP has a long history of working with WHO to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and remains steadfast in our commitment to support partners and governments respond to emergencies and drive progress towards the health-related SDGs. For this reason, WFP will continue to further augment cooperation in the fight against COVID-19 with WHO via our bilateral corporate Memorandum of Understanding, through our commitment to The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (GAP) and via mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Crisis Management Team.

Thank you.