WFP Statement to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly
May 2021

President, Honourable Delegates, Director-General,

The World Food Programme (WFP) would like to commend 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 a huge 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 in children.

WFP estimates that as many as 270 million people could suffer from acute hunger in 2021. Of absolute urgent and imminent concern today are more than 34 million people who already face emergency levels of acute food insecurity and are highly vulnerable to face famine or famine-like conditions without urgent immediate life-saving action.

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. WFP's Common Services have enabled critical health and humanitarian personnel and cargo to reach the locations where they are needed most. As of 31 March, in support of the health and humanitarian community's response to the pandemic, WFP has transported 29,070 passengers through 1,550 flights and dispatched for free a total of 131,579 m3 of critical COVID-19 cargo to 162 countries on behalf of WHO and 47 organizations.

As highlighted in WHA73.1 (2020), now more than ever it is time to invest in multilateralism. COVID-19 has exposed the fragility in our global systems and demonstrated the need for collective action to address global threats that transcend borders. Such action must put communities and affected people at the centre and prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable.
WFP stands in solidarity with those furthest behind, as well as health and humanitarian workers around the globe and supports the global call for vaccine equity.

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.