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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

20 August 2008

Mr. Ulrik Halsteen  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations Office at Geneva  
CH 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

Dear Mr. Halsteen,

Thank you for your letter, dated 16 June 2008, which requests input from the World Food Programme to your ongoing study of the human rights implications of climate change.

Climate change will have serious implications for human rights, with the world's poorest and most vulnerable bearing the brunt of its impacts. Climate change will also make the human rights challenges that WFP confronts more drastic, by altering the character and distribution of the vulnerabilities that cause them.

WFP's expected contributions to the global response to climate change are as follows:

1. WFP has the capacity to respond to climate-related emergencies through its global logistical apparatus and extensive deep field network. As the largest and most operational UN Agency, WFP fights hunger on the front lines of complex humanitarian crises. Some of these crises, such as droughts, floods, degradation of natural resources, and conflicts over access to natural resources, will be increasingly linked to, or exacerbated by, climate change. By responding quickly and effectively to protect lives, living standards, and development in such crisis situations, WFP intends to play a leading role in mitigating the negative human rights consequences on many of the world's most vulnerable people.
2. WFP provides global public goods such as vulnerability analysis, early warning systems, emergency needs assessments and risk transfer mechanisms, including index-based weather insurance. To the extent that climate change is expected to hinder the development of the world's poorest communities, WFP's "toolbox" of programme options will be critical to protecting economic and social rights—especially the rights to life, adequate food, water, and health. As climate change shifts hunger and hunger risk across different populations, needs assessments and early warning stand to be more important than ever to guaranteeing the human rights of the most world's vulnerable people.
3. WFP has developed the capacity to implement community-based projects that help reduce the social and environmental vulnerabilities of food insecure communities and help them adapt to climate change. These can include building of flood defences and small-scale



irrigation systems, harvesting water or rehabilitating depleted land, through employment programmes targeted at food insecure groups. In 2007 alone, WFP's climate change related community-based activities accounted for USD 280 million in programme funds, and reached over 13 million beneficiaries. These activities help vulnerable individuals safeguard their rights to food and development by adapting to the actual and expected impacts of climate change. (For a more detailed analysis of WFP's climate change related activities, see the annex below.)

Beyond the community-based adaptation projects described above, WFP has piloted harm-prevention strategies in a number of disaster-prone countries, including Honduras and El Salvador. Contingency planning in such countries will mitigate the negative rights implications of severe climatic events that may result from climate change.

A further approach deployed by WFP is the Purchase for Progress initiative. WFP seeks to build on the strength of its local procurement activities to promote developing, by leveraging its purchasing power in support of smallholder farmers in developing countries. This approach helps to avoid backsliding on the realization of rights in the context of climate change.

WFP, in close cooperation with the other Rome-based Agencies and the broader UN System, will continue to work to secure human rights in the face of climate change, by helping the world's poorest and most vulnerable to build their resilience and their capacity to adapt.

I would like to congratulate you for this initiative and I look forward to working with you to ensure that human rights retain their rightful place at the top of our common agenda.

Yours sincerely,

David Stevenson  
Director of Policy, Planning and Strategy



## Annex I

### **WFP's Climate Change Related Activities**

WFP's niche for contributing to the global strategy for climate change adaptation lies in its capacity to both respond to climate-related emergencies and to implement, at the local level, activities that help food insecure communities build resilience to climatic shocks.

In the last year, WFP activities contributed to the construction or rehabilitation of 1,579 ponds, 1,571 wells, 14,305 kilometres of irrigation systems, and 1,621 kilometres of dykes. 169,884 hectares of land were protected, cultivated or rehabilitated and made available for agricultural production, and 966,753 hectares of land were reforested throughout the world. Furthermore, over 60 million trees were produced or planted in 35 countries. Below is a list of WFP activities relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation in 2007.

### **1. Water Conservation and Management**

#### **Water Harvesting and Storage**

1,579 ponds constructed or rehabilitated and 95,627 cubic metres of ponds constructed

Afghanistan	Water ponds rehabilitated	Number	167
Uganda	Water ponds constructed	Number	2
Cambodia	Ponds constructed	Number	3
Central African Republic	Fish ponds developed	Number	8
Honduras	Small fish ponds constructed	Number	73
Malawi	Fish ponds completed	Number	7
Mozambique	Fish ponds developed	Number	3
Myanmar	Fish ponds constructed	Number	889
Pakistan	Cattle ponds constructed/rehabilitated	Number	191
Uganda	Fish ponds constructed	Number	173
Zambia	Fish ponds established	Number	63
Ethiopia	Ponds constructed	Cubic metre	95,627

1,571 wells constructed or rehabilitated and 62,033 cubic metres of community wells constructed in Bolivia

Afghanistan	Water wells rehabilitated	Number	732
Central African Republic	Wells dug	Number	2
Cote d'Ivoire	Water wells rehabilitated	Number	14
Djibouti	Wells constructed	Number	13
Guatemala	Wells dug	Number	24
Guinea-Bissau	Wells built	Number	23
Honduras	Water wells rehabilitated	Number	42
Mauritania	Wells constructed	Number	77
Pakistan	Wells constructed/rehabilitated	Number	215
Somalia	Wells constructed/rehabilitated	Number	9
Sudan	Hand-dug wells constructed	Number	11
Zambia	Wells dug	Number	300
Sri Lanka	Wells constructed	Number	109
Bolivia	Community wells constructed	Cubic metre	62,033

160 dams constructed or rehabilitated and 3,173 cubic metres of dams constructed

Mauritania	Dams constructed	Number	7
Senegal	Dams built and secured	Number	112
Somalia	Dams constructed/rehabilitated	Number	41
Chad	Dams constructed	Cubic metre	3,173

More than 5,200 water conservation structures built or rehabilitated



Afghanistan	Water Reservoirs Rehabilitated	Number	2,415
Honduras	Rain water harvesting systems	Number	20
Sudan	Water sources rehabilitated or constructed	Number	77
Jordan	Water conservation cisterns constructed	Number	700
Mali	Water conservation structures built/rehabilitated	Number	40
Myanmar	Water conservation structures built/rehabilitated	Number	113
Kenya	Water conservation structures built/rehabilitated	Number	31
Somalia	Water diversion embankments for grazing	Number	718
India	Water harvesting structures constructed	Number	1,042
Uganda	Water tanks provided at school	Number	44
Madagascar	Water retention structure rehabilitated	Cubic metre	713,200
Bolivia	Water reservoirs constructed	Cubic metre	406,635
Kenya	Kilometres of fence for protecting water sources	Km	15
Rwanda	Runoff retention trenches	Hectare	3,135
Chad	Water encatchment constructed	Hectare	50

## Irrigation and Drainage Systems

14,305 Kilometres of irrigation systems constructed or rehabilitated and 592 water management and irrigation systems constructed or rehabilitated

Afghanistan	Canals constructed/rehabilitated	Km	11,459
Armenia	Water/Irrigation pipeline constructed/repared	Km	240
Cambodia	Canals rehabilitated or constructed	Km	6
DPR Korea	Irrigation system constructed	Km	21
East Timor	Irrigation canals constructed	Km	197
Guinea-Bissau	Irrigation canals constructed	Km	34
Indonesia	Irrigation channels constructed	Km	1,327
Madagascar	Irrigation canal rehabilitated	Km	792
Mozambique	Irrigation canals constructed	Km	69
Somalia	Irrigation canals/embankments constructed	Km	3
Sri Lanka	Irrigation canals rehabilitated	Km	157
Bolivia	Small irrigation systems constructed	Number	100
Mauritania	Irrigated perimeters rehabilitated	Number	351
Peru	Small irrigation systems built	Number	89
Niger	Water management works created	Number	16
Tanzania	Water distribution points constructed	Number	36

More than 593 Kilometres of drainage systems constructed or rehabilitated

Georgia	Drainage channels rehabilitated	Km	456
Guatemala	Drainage channels constructed	Km	14
Sri Lanka	Drainage channels rehabilitated	Km	23
Haiti	Rehabilitated canals/drains	Cubic Metre	53,495

## Flood defences and other climate proof infrastructure

For example, 1,621 kilometres of dykes constructed or rehabilitated and 12,465 cubic metres of dykes constructed or rehabilitated

Guatemala	Dykes constructed	Km	1,270
Guinea Bissau	Dykes rehabilitated	Km	305
DPR Korea	Embankment	Km	7
Sudan	Dykes constructed in South Sudan	Km	29
Mauritania	Dykes constructed or rehabilitated	Number	329
Afghanistan	River Sides (Nawars) Constructed	Number	65
Bolivia	Dykes constructed	Cubic metre	138,350
Chad	Dykes rehabilitated	Cubic metre	6,270
Georgia	Protecting gabions constructed	Cubic metre	6,195
Guatemala	Gabions constructed	Cubic km	580
Haiti	Strengthening of river benches	Km	4,500



## **2. Land rehabilitation and management**

### **Land rehabilitated and made available for agricultural production**

169,884 hectares of land protected, cultivated or rehabilitated and made available for agricultural production

Afghanistan	Land Cultivated	Hectare	17,500
Bolivia	Land rehabilitated	Hectare	7,489
Burkina Faso	Surface of rehabilitated and cultivated	Hectare	2,540
Burundi	Marshlands rehabilitated and land cultivated	Hectare	3,315
Colombia	Land sown or made available for crop production	Hectare	3,186
Congo (Braz)	Land cultivated	Hectare	300
Djibouti	Land cultivated	Hectare	35
DPR Korea	Land reclaimed	Hectare	585
East Timor	Land reclaimed	Hectare	200
El Salvador	Land protected through soil conservation works	Hectare	878
Ethiopia	Area Closure	Hectare	28,292
Gambia	Land cultivated with maize and groundnuts	Hectare	1,015
Georgia	Arable land rehabilitated	Hectare	549
Guatemala	Land protected through soil conservation works	Hectare	589
Guinea-Bissau	Area of land converted for cultivation (tubers, maize, rice)	Hectare	5,067
Honduras	Agricultural land rehabilitated and home gardens	Hectare	4,195
India	Land development	Hectare	3,084
Jordan	Land protected through soil conservation measures	Hectare	532
Kenya	Land reclaimed, protected and cultivated	Hectare	27,834
Liberia	Land cultivated with rice, tubers and legumes	Hectare	2,279
Malawi	Communal gardens and irrigation farming	Hectare	160
Mali	Land protected, cultivated or rehabilitated for grazing	Hectare	1,115
Mozambique	Land cultivated with drought-resistant crops	Hectare	52
Myanmar	Agricultural land developed	Hectare	475
Nepal	Land irrigated/protected/utilised under flood control measures	Hectare	6,089
Niger	Land recuperated from desertification	Hectare	3,620
Philippines	Land cultivated	Hectare	8,349
Russia	Land cultivated in agricultural projects	Hectare	3,117
Rwanda	Marshland reclaimed and cultivated	Hectare	488
Senegal	Mangrove swamps regenerated and cultivated land	Hectare	22,706
Sierra Leone	Small holder tree crop plantations rehabilitated	Hectare	7,881
Somalia	Farmlands protected from erosion	Hectare	779
Sudan	Land cultivated in South Sudan	Hectare	526
Syria	Land converted into farmlands	Hectare	3,506
Tajikistan	Land protected through soil conservation measures	Hectare	814
Uganda	Woodlots and seed multiplication	Hectare	1,403
Zambia	Land under conservation farming and crop diversification	Hectare	2,340

### **Land reforested**

152.851 hectares of land reforested, resulting in more than 60 million trees planted.

Armenia	Fruit trees (Orchards established)	Hectare	27
Bolivia	Land reforestation	Hectare	1,014
Burundi	Land reforestation	Hectare	432
Guatemala	Land reforestation	Hectare	3
Guinea	Land protected through reforestation	Hectare	312
Guinea-Bissau	Land reforested	Hectare	75
Honduras	Agroforestry	Hectare	334
India	Forest plantation	Hectare	140,362
Mali	Land reforestation	Hectare	10
Mauritania	Land reforested	Hectare	900
Myanmar	Community forests established	Hectare	1,188
Pakistan	Land stabilization through tree plantation	Hectare	1,619
Peru	Area reforested	Hectare	3,232
Senegal	Forest lands protected through reforestation activities	Hectare	3,061
Tanzania	Land conserved through tree planting	Hectare	184

### **Terracing**



Examples include 1,088 hectares of terracing in Peru and Rwanda, 515 terraces built in Rwanda or 2,096 kilometres of anti-erosion terraces in Burundi

Peru	Terraces constructed	Hectare	169
Rwanda	Hilly land terracing	Hectare	919
Somalia	Stone terraces built against erosion	Number	515
Burundi	Anti-erosive terraces	Km	2,096
Haiti	Soil containment terraces	Cubic metres	27,221
Pakistan	Field terracing and protection walls	Cubic metres	2,384