

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

We thank the Appropriations Committee for more than 60 years of bipartisan support of U.S. international food aid programs, including P.L. 480 Title II (Food for Peace), Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education within the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

The U.S. and world are facing unprecedented times during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. This pandemic, compounded with already elevated times of famine due to natural disasters and human conflict, is impacting the lives of millions of children, women, and men around the world and their ability to access food. The undersigned organizations respectfully request \$1 billion be included in the next COVID-19 supplemental funding package for procurement of U.S. commodities through U.S. international food aid programs to address the immediate needs of the emerging global hunger crisis.

On April 21, 2020, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley delivered sobering remarks on what Beasley called, “the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.” Mr. Beasley stated there are 821 million people going to bed hungry every night around the world. A new Global Report on Food Crisis shows there are another 135 million facing crisis levels of hunger or worse. Mr. Beasley went on to state, the “World Food Programme analysis shows that, due to the Coronavirus, an additional 130 million people could be pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020. That’s a total of 265 million people.”

The United States has a long history of administering the largest, most diverse, reliable, safe, and effective food assistance program in the world. American agriculture is proud of the role it plays in providing in-kind commodity and nutritional support in alleviating world hunger. Even

at a time when U.S. agriculture is facing market disruptions, we are committed to feeding the world and those most in need.

Now is the time for the U.S. to show global leadership in response to “the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.” The American farmer and U.S. food supply chain is well positioned to provide these critical products to those most vulnerable across the world. We want to again express our deep appreciation for your leadership and support of these life-saving food assistance programs and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

ADM	National Barley Growers Association
Agricor	National Corn Growers Association
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute	National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
American Farm Bureau Federation	National Farmers Union
American Pulse Association	National Milk Producers Federation
American Soybean Association	National Sorghum Producers
Breedlove Foods	North American Millers' Association
Bunge	North Dakota Farmers Union
Cantera Partners	North Dakota Grain Growers Association
Didion Milling Inc.	Repco
Edesia	Semo Milling, LLC
Global Food & Nutrition Inc.	Transylvania Vocational Services, Inc.
Goodwill of the Heartland	U.S. Canola Association
GrainPro Incorporated	U.S. Pea and Lentil Trade Association
Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association	US Dry Bean Council
Land O'Lakes, Inc.	USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
LifeLine Foods, LLC	USA Rice
MANA Nutrition	Venture 37
National Association of Wheat Growers	Wisconsin Corn Growers Association

Attachment: WFP Executive Director Beasley's Remarks

21 April 2020

WFP Chief warns of hunger pandemic as COVID-19 spreads (Statement to UN Security Council)

Transcript as delivered of remarks by David Beasley, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director to today's virtual session of the UN Security Council on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Protecting Civilians Affected by Conflict-Induced Hunger

NEW YORK – Forgive me for speaking bluntly, but I'd like to lay out for you very clearly what the world is facing at this very moment. At the same time while dealing with a COVID-19 pandemic, we are also on the brink of a hunger pandemic.

In my conversations with world leaders over the past many months, before the Coronavirus even became an issue, I was saying that 2020 would be facing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II for a number of reasons.

Such as the wars in Syria and Yemen. The deepening crises in places like South Sudan and, as Jan Egeland will no doubt set out, Burkina Faso and the Central Sahel region. The desert locust swarms in Africa, as Director General Qu highlighted in his remarks. And more frequent natural disasters and changing weather patterns. The economic crisis in Lebanon affecting millions of Syrian refugees. DRC, Sudan, Ethiopia. And the list goes on. We're already facing a perfect storm.

So today, with COVID-19, I want to stress that we are not only facing a global health pandemic but also a global humanitarian catastrophe. Millions of civilians living in conflict-scarred nations, including many women and children, face being pushed to the brink of starvation, with the spectre of famine a very real and dangerous possibility.

This sounds truly shocking but let me give you the numbers: 821 million people go to bed hungry every night all over the world, chronically hungry, and as the new Global Report on Food Crisis published today shows, there are a further 135 million people facing crisis levels of hunger or worse. That means 135 million people on earth are marching towards the brink of starvation. But now the World Food Programme analysis shows that, due to the Coronavirus, an additional 130 million people could be pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020. That's a total of 265 million people.

On any given day now, WFP offers a lifeline to nearly 100 million people, up from about 80 million just a few years ago. This includes about 30 million people who literally depend on us to stay alive. If we can't reach these people with the life-saving assistance they need, our analysis shows that 300,000 people could starve to death every single day over a three-month period. This does not include the increase of starvation due to COVID-19.

In a worst-case scenario, we could be looking at famine in about three dozen countries, and in fact, in 10 of these countries we already have more than one million people per country who are on the verge of starvation. In many places, this human suffering is the heavy price of conflict.

At WFP, we are proud that this Council made the historic decision to pass Resolution 2417 in May 2018. It was amazing to see the council come together. Now we have to live up to our pledge to protect the most vulnerable and act immediately to save lives.

But this is only in my opinion only the first part of the strategy needed to protect conflict-riven countries from a hunger pandemic caused by the Coronavirus. There is also a real danger that more people could potentially die from the economic impact of COVID-19 than from the virus itself.

This is why I am talking about a hunger pandemic. It is critical we come together as one united global community to defeat this disease, and protect the most vulnerable nations and communities from its potentially devastating effects.

Lockdowns and economic recession are expected to lead to a major loss of income among the working poor. Overseas remittances will also drop sharply - this will hurt countries such as Haiti, Nepal, and Somalia just a name a couple. The loss of tourism receipts will damage countries such as Ethiopia, where it accounts for 47% of total exports. The collapsing oil prices in lower-income countries like South Sudan will have an impact significantly, where oil accounts for 98.8% of total exports. And, of course, when donor countries' revenues are down, how much impact will this have on life saving foreign aid

The economic and health impacts of COVID-19 are most worrisome for communities in countries across Africa as well as the Middle East, because the virus threatens further damage to the lives and livelihoods of people already put at risk by conflict.

WFP and our partners are going all-out to help them we'll do everything we possibly can. For example, we know that children are particularly vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, so we are prioritizing assistance to them.

Right now, as you may know 1.6 billion children and young people are currently out of school due to lockdown closures. Nearly 370 million children are missing out on nutritious school meals - you can only imagine when children don't get the nutrition they need their immunity goes down. Where nutritious school meals have been suspended by school closures, we are working to replace them with take-home rations, wherever possible.

As you know, WFP is the logistics backbone for the humanitarian world and even more so now for the global effort to beat this pandemic. We have delivered millions upon millions of personal protective equipment, testing kits and face masks to 78 countries on behalf of the World Health Organization. We are also running humanitarian air services to get frontline

health professionals doctors nurses, and humanitarian staff into countries that need help, especially while passenger air industry is basically about shut down.

But we need to do so much more, and I urge this Council to lead the way. First and foremost, we need peace. As the Secretary-General recently said very clearly, a global ceasefire is essential.

Second, we need all parties involved in conflicts to give us swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to all vulnerable communities, so they can get the assistance to them that they need, regardless of who they are or where they are. We also need in a very general sense humanitarian goods and commercial trade to continue flowing across borders, because they are the lifeline of global food systems as well as the global economy. Supply chains *have to keep moving* if we are going to overcome this pandemic and get food from where it is produced to where it is needed. It also means resisting the temptation to introduce export bans or import subsidies, which can lead to price hikes and almost always backfire.

WFP is working hand in glove with governments to build and strengthen national safety nets. This is critical right now to ensure fair access to assistance and help maintain peace and prevent rising tensions among communities.

Third, we need coordinated action to support life-saving humanitarian assistance. For example, WFP is implementing plans to pre-position three months' worth of food and cash to serve country operations identified as priorities. We are asking donors to accelerate the (US) \$1.9 billion in funding that has already been pledged, so we can build stockpiles and create these life-saving buffers, and protect the most vulnerable from the effects of supply chain disruptions, commodity shortages, economic damage and lockdowns. You understand exactly what I'm talking about.

We are also requesting a further USD350 million to set up a network of logistics hubs and transport systems to keep humanitarian supply chains moving around the world. They will also provide field hospitals and medical evacuations to the frontline humanitarian and health workers, as needed and strategically.

Excellencies, two years ago the Security Council took a landmark step when it recognized, and condemned, the devastating human toll of conflict paid in poverty and hunger. Resolution 2417 also highlighted the need for early warning systems, and today I am here to raise that alarm.

There are no famines yet. But I must warn you that if we don't prepare and act now – to secure access, avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade - we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months.

The actions we take will determine our success, or failure, in building sustainable food systems as the basis of stable and peaceful societies. The truth is, we do not have time on our side, so let's act wisely – and let's act fast. I do believe that with our expertise and partnerships, we can

bring together the teams and the programs necessary to make certain the COVID-19 pandemic does not become a humanitarian and food crisis catastrophe. So Mr. President, thank you, thank you very much.

#

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies, building prosperity and supporting a sustainable future for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.

Follow us on Twitter @wfp_media @WFPChief

Contact

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

Frances Kennedy, WFP/ Rome,
Mob. +39 346 7600 806

Bettina Luescher WFP/ Berlin,
Mob. +49 160 9926 1730

Elisabeth Byrs, WFP/ Geneva,
Mob. +41 79 842 8057

Jane Howard, WFP/ London,
Tel. +44 (0)20 3857 7413
Mob. +44 (0)796 8008 474

Steve Taravella, WFP/ Washington,
Tel. +1 202 653 1149, Mob. +1 202 770 5993

Shada Moghraby, WFP/ New York,
Tel. + 1-646-556-6914, Mob. +1-929-289-9867