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**Panel discussion**  
***On the ground – humanitarian challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

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Thank you, Sir Nicholas Young, for your kind remarks.

I would like to thank the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom for hosting this important event to stimulate dialogue and engage partners from the UN and civil society.

I would also like to acknowledge distinguished colleagues from UNHCR and UNICEF, both close partners of the World Food Programme.

Additionally, I would like to thank the UK-based civil society representatives, including NGOs such as Save the Children, Oxfam, Concern and Islamic Relief Worldwide, many of whom work side by side with the World Food Programme around the globe.

For those of you here who may not know, the World Food Programme is the food assistance arm of the United Nations system, reaching nearly 100 million people a year in over 70 countries. Through targeted interventions, WFP uses food assistance as part of a coordinated relief mechanism – with the support of over 2,400 partners globally – to reach vulnerable groups during emergencies and periods of recovery, strengthen livelihoods and build national capacities to safeguard against hunger.

Today we're discussing 'on the ground humanitarian challenges in the 21st century.' For the World Food Programme working to end extreme hunger and poverty, this is about the logistics of providing food assistance, living and working effectively in some of the most remote and dangerous places in the world, and designing programmes that meet the needs of the vulnerable people in rapidly changing environments.

I would like to talk this afternoon about the challenges and the opportunities that WFP is facing and how we are moving on many fronts to be responsive to the call for greater efficiency, reform, improvement, and retooling – to be better, stronger, more efficient and effective than ever, as WFP continues to set its goal to be a pacesetter within the United Nations system. We are working in areas from security to financial management, from emergency response and programming, to capacity-building, handover, and hunger solution strategies. And we are doing it together with our partners.

WFP has been called to respond to natural disasters, from a devastating drought in the Horn of Africa last year, to the floods in the Philippines, to the unprecedented emergency response following the Haiti earthquake. These last few years have seen multiple crises, from food to financial, to conflict and natural disasters, driving the number of hungry people up – topping one billion for the first time in history. That means that one out of every six people on earth will wake up tomorrow not sure if they can find enough to eat.

Food security is, of course, non-negotiable. If neglected, we face catastrophe.

One out of every six people on this planet is chronically hungry: I think this moves food security from being just a humanitarian concern to one that affects, really, the peace and stability of the world. We know that if people do not have food, only one of three things happens: they migrate, they revolt or they die. The humanitarian community needs a broader range of options to deal with this growing problem. Many agencies, including the ones represented here today, are working to do just that.

In addition to emergency relief, WFP provides its extensive logistics services to move life-saving humanitarian supplies by land, air and sea for relief agencies around the world.

Under the Cluster Approach adopted in 2005, WFP was tasked with leading the global Logistics Cluster, coordinating logistics operations whenever a humanitarian emergency requires a joint response from UN agencies and the broader humanitarian community.

In times when resources must be maximised and duplication and waste are unacceptable, WFP and partners have used the cluster approach to help maximize comparative advantages among the humanitarian community – and WFP continues to invest in strengthening these interagency mechanisms.

For humanitarians, striving to improve operational efficiency and enhance accountability is among the number of challenges faced working on the frontlines of disasters and conflict affected areas.

The security challenges facing WFP grew clearer following the October 2009 suicide attack on the WFP office in Islamabad, when a man detonated explosives in our compound. Five WFP staff members died in the blast and a number of others were seriously injured.

The landscape we all work in is changing.

Despite these challenges, WFP with the support of NGO partners and the government of Pakistan continued to provide vital food assistance to nearly 10 million people in the country last year, including relief to nearly 3 million civilians displaced by conflict that erupted in the Swat Valley.

Other humanitarian agencies – including Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and NGO partners come under similar threats in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and other operations.

The challenge for agencies like WFP, UNHRC, UNICEF and the Red Cross extends beyond the issue of providing coordinated and targeted assistance in an effective and accountable way, but includes the provision of protecting staff and partners serving on

the frontlines and in conflict-prone areas. We must not lose sight of this.

These changing operational dynamics also tell us that we must be smarter about our programmatic response and the design of our interventions.

Lessons learned from the Haiti earthquake have shown the humanitarian community that we must be ready to respond to large scale urban operations. In addition, military support and civil military coordination was a key facet in bringing not just humanitarian relief into the country, but also in supporting the creation of a secure environment. As we saw in Haiti, relief must also be coordinated under the leadership of the national government to prevent duplication and ensure that targeted programmes such as school meals and reconstruction projects impact communities with the greatest needs. Building partnerships grounded by national leadership are an essential component to humanitarian assistance, and we can improve.

One year on from the Global Food Crisis, we know – unfortunately – that the three F's – the food, fuel and financial crises – have set us back, advancing food insecurity for an additional 115 million people in the world – pushing the number of hungry past 1 billion.

Thanks in part to the excellent work of David Nabarro, Coordinator of the Secretary-General's High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, and Josette Sheeran, WFP's Executive Director, we know that the new face of hunger is one driven not only by poverty, insecurity, discrimination or local crop failure and natural disasters – but also by global economic factors.

One year on, we see that fault lines have been revealed in access to food from the village level up to the national, regional and global levels, and that the long-term drivers of volatility and supply and price remain in place.

Coupled with the growing numbers of chronically hungry, the strain on resources from donors, the call from Member States, justly so, for a bigger bang for taxpayer money, and the challenges of working in conflict-prone areas – we have our work cut out for us.

I would like to end with a few thoughts.

The world was making good progress; from 1969 to 2004, we cut the proportion of hungry in half. The absolute numbers grew but the proportion was cut in half. The world was producing more food than ever before, and at a lower price. We have the knowledge and tools to reduce hunger.

Chronic hunger, however, cannot be ended by governments alone, by the private sector alone or by civil society alone. You have to have all three at the table, and this is part of the revolution that's happening today – linking up these actors in a more meaningful way. Today's financial climate is a reminder to many of us in the room that we must use our resources wisely and in partnership, relying upon our comparative advantages to work more efficiently.

Even as we continue to meet the emergency needs of the most vulnerable populations, we must work to build an anti-famine mechanism for the 21st Century – one that enacts bold reforms, strengthens and enables partnerships at the national level, and ensures adequate access to food for all.

Thank you.

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