

Statement by Mr. Jingree on Food aid in the context of conflict settlement: Afghanistan and other crisis areas – 4 April 2002

I would like to thank Ms. Bertini for her very useful and informative briefing this morning. Indeed, the information which she shared with us about the positive role that food aid plays in alleviating international crises and in the recovery and stability of affected countries was a real eye-opener. We commend the exemplary role of the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies, nongovernmental organizations and bilateral donors in extending food aid to the needy, sometimes in very difficult and dangerous situations, as mentioned by Ms. Bertini herself.

Empirical evidence convincingly proves that the lack of a food aid programme in a disaster area in the right place and at the right moment can aggravate the humanitarian crisis and impede the recovery of the State, thereby threatening its political and social stability.

My delegation wishes to place on record its appreciation for the outstanding contribution of Ms. Catherine Bertini, the outgoing Executive Director of the WFP, and for the formidable job that she has done during her mandate over the past 10 years. Her vision of a world in which all have access at all times to the nourishment they need has paid fruitful dividends. Indeed, her contribution to the advancement of women and children, particularly in the Horn of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, will always be remembered. We wish her every success in her future career and professional life. We also congratulate Mr. James Morris on his appointment as the new Executive Director, and we pledge our unqualified support to him and his staff.

We would like to make a few comments. First, access to food is one of the basic needs of a human being. A situation in which food is absent or denied can quickly lead to social instability, conflict and, eventually, crisis. The shortage of food should not be allowed to be a factor in further aggravating existing conflict. We therefore need to ensure access to food, particularly in remote areas, so as to avoid the

intensification of conflict. In this regard, we encourage the WFP to continue to work towards this end.

Secondly, at a time of conflict, warlords may create artificial shortages of food so as to cause people to rebel against the central authority. We would like to ask Ms. Bertini what the WFP does to deal with such cases of artificial shortages of food.

Thirdly, in Afghanistan the WFP has been extremely positive in contributing to the alleviation of the plight of the needy, not only in situations of conflict, but also during natural disasters. My delegation commends the prompt response of the WFP in delivering some 552 tonnes of food aid to northern Afghanistan after the recent devastating earthquakes.

This morning, the delegation of Mexico emphasized the need for coordination in the activities of the humanitarian agencies. Perhaps Ms. Bertini could enlighten us as to whether any coordinating mechanism is in place with other agencies regarding the distribution of food in or outside Kabul.

Fourthly, we are aware of the problems arising from the lack of security in conflict situations where WFP and other agencies work. The Council is not insensitive to those problems. Mauritius, as a Council member, will continue to appeal for improved security and access for the personnel of WFP and other agencies concerned with humanitarian activities.

Finally, we would like to express our full support for the important work being carried out by WFP