

MR. MARTTI AHTISAARI FINALIZED THE THIRD VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn of Africa, travelled to Ethiopia for three days from the 2 of April to review the overall humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and to focus on reducing food insecurity and vulnerability to future droughts. This trip was Mr Ahtisaari's third visit to the country since his designation as Special Envoy in June 2003. Mr. Ahtisaari noted that the generous response of donors in 2003, and the partnership developed between the Government, donors, UN, NGOs and other international organizations that helped avert a major humanitarian disaster in Ethiopia during the drought and subsequent emergency last year. In 2004, seven million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance, for which donor support continues to be required. This is a 45 percent reduction from 2003, which is due to much better rains and crop production. While about 57 percent of total food aid requirements have been met by confirmed contributions so far, amounting to some 490,000 tons, only 20 percent of required non-food aid has been made available by donors, mainly for health, water and sanitation, seeds, and capacity strengthening. In meetings with Government, UN and donor representatives, Mr. Ahtisaari discussed in detail the Government's new food security initiatives such as the new Coalition for Food and Livelihood Security, the program designed to eliminate food insecurity among five million chronically food insecure people in the next three to five years and the voluntary resettlement program. He emphasized the necessity of Government, donors, and UN agencies to join forces to meet humanitarian needs while finding long-term development solutions.

DPPC LAUNCHES INFORMATION CENTER

The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) officially launched the Information Center and the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) modernization project at its head office on 5 April 2004 in the presence of donor representatives, UN agencies and NGO directors. The Information Center was established in February 2003 with budget support of about US \$ 700,000 obtained from various donors and serves as a support unit for information exchange within the humanitarian stakeholders. The major objectives are to fill the gap of information that exists within the humanitarian stakeholders and acting as an information conduit that will enable DPPC to effectively coordinate and manage food and non-food emergency aid. The center also launched its redesigned DPPC website at www.dppc.gov.et.

DONORS RESPOND TO WFP'S SPECIAL ALERT

The resourcing situation for the refugee programme that provides food rations to 126,000 refugees in Ethiopia has recently improved, with further pledges announced by several donors in response to a recent appeal for urgently needed support. The donor alert has so far raised more than 50 percent of the tonnage required up to the end of 2004. In-kind contributions will allow WFP to resume 2,100 Kcal rations starting May through August. It will also guarantee a repatriation package for the voluntary return programme of refugees from Ayisha camp to northern Somalia, and assistance to the small caseload in Hartisheik camp, also in the east of the country. Despite ration cuts in February and March, WFP still managed to support supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes in the eastern and western camps providing extra calorie intake to malnourished children, nursing and expectant mothers, and the sick. The unresourced balance to cover the needs of the refugee programme until the end 2004 is 8,000 tons of cereals (pipeline break in September), 650 tons of vegetable oil (breaks in August), 70 tons of salt (breaks in September), 600 tons of pulses (breaks in October) and 150 tons of CSB (breaks in October).

WORLD VISION CONTINUES ITS RELIEF FOOD DISTRIBUTION

World Vision is carrying out relief food distribution in ten woredas of four regions: Mirab Abaya, Humbo, Soddo Zuria, Damot Gale and Omo Sheleko (SNNPR); Jeju (Oromiya); Assaita, Afambo and Dubti (Afar) and Tenta (Amhara). The distribution started in February 2004 and will continue up to July 2004 on the basis of the 2004 food appeal. The food distribution addresses the needs of 218,000 beneficiaries. The number of beneficiaries is expected to rise up to 260,600 as of April 2004. The food resource was secured predominantly from USAID's Joint Emergency Operational Plan (JEOP) covering nine woredas while the remaining one woreda is covered by funding from EU.

DEPARTURE OF MR. SAMUEL NYAMBI, UN HUMANITARIAN AND RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Mr. Samuel Nyambi, UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, will be leaving Ethiopia on 9 April 2004. He has been working in Ethiopia since July 1998. He will be going to Johannesburg, South Africa as the regional head of the new UNDP regional office.