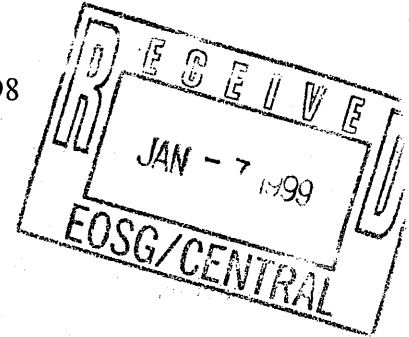




THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

EU
WFP

22 December 1998



Excellency,

In May 1998, the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) initiated a review of the future directions of food aid for development. I am writing to ask that the European Union actively support WFP's development role.

There may well be some who have expressed reservations about food aid for development. But food aid has changed a lot since earlier days when it was driven by a concern for surplus disposal. Food aid, like other development assistance, is very much a scarce resource and great care is taken to use it where and when it is particularly effective. An important aspect of this is to concentrate WFP's development food aid on the people who need it most, focusing on the least developed countries and the most vulnerable groups within them.

Those who need development food aid are those who are not only poor but also marginalised in some way. These are the people least likely to be reached by the first benefits of broad economic growth and the least likely to benefit from technical assistance, from capital projects or other assistance provided bilaterally or through the International Development Banks. They need direct, immediate assistance, and targeted food aid brings it to them.

His Excellency
Mr. Jacques Santer
President of the European Commission
Brussels

As we have learned more about the linkages between development and humanitarian crises, the international community has underscored the importance of bridging the two. WFP, which works in both emergency relief and development, is particularly well placed to move seamlessly between the two. Its work in development is the foundation for effective responses to emergency situations. The most recent demonstration of this was in Central America. WFP's support for development projects has given WFP an on-the-ground understanding of the region which was invaluable in responding to the devastation brought by Hurricane Mitch.

WFP is a key member of the United Nations team to eradicate hunger and poverty. In recognition of the important role that WFP plays in development, it is a member of the United Nations Development Group, which was set up as part of the UN reform measures.

The European Commission is well placed to have an influential and constructive voice in the ongoing policy discussion about where and when food aid can best contribute to development. I would, therefore, ask the Commission to support a strong development role for WFP.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Kofi A. Annan