



**Address of the WFP Representative and Country Director, Jennifer Bitonde,
read of her behalf by the OIC Robert Oliver, 23 May 2018, RRRP launch**

The Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Stephen Kampyongo
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ms. Pamela Kabamba
The Commissioner for Refugees, Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Abdon Mawere,
Donor partners and NGO Cooperating Partners,
The Resident Coordinator, Ms Janet Rogan, and members of the UN family,
Members of the Press,
Ladies and gentlemen

My name is Robert Oliver, and I am the Head of Programmes at World Food Programme in Zambia. I am honoured to address you on behalf of the Representative and Country Director, Ms. Jennifer Bitonde, who is away on official duty in South Africa.

The WFP is delighted to participate in the today's appeal in support of the Government's response to refugees arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo. WFP is also pleased to join the UN family and other partners to draw attention to the needs of people fleeing their countries due to conflict and other hardships.

Eighty percent of the new refugees in Zambia are women and children, which underlines their level of vulnerability. The refugees require food assistance distributed on a regular, predictable basis until they can provide for themselves. In the interest of ensuring their health and proper nourishment, we as partners simply cannot afford to give them any less than the required minimum of 2,100 kilo calories, per person, per day.

This year, the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund ,United States Government and Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit under the Vice President's office enabled WFP to provide 15,000 refugees with a basic and nutritious food basket comprised of legumes, cereals, iodized salt, fortified vegetable oil and blended foods enriched with micronutrients. However, the funding situation remains precarious. During February and March, WFP was forced to cut rations in half because of a shortfall in resources. Our donors enabled us to restore the full food basket in April, but going forward, with the current number of refugees in need of food assistance (15,000), we will run out of food again in November unless we receive new funding to take us until mid-2019.

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

WFP has been conducting a feasibility study on the use of alternative food assistance modalities other than in-kind food among refugees in Mantapala. As a result, we would like to pilot a voucher activity between October and December 2018 for 5,000 refugees. With a funding shortfall expected in November, we will be unable to sustain this modality. Yet it is cost-effective, it has a multiplier effect on the host communities, and allows refugees to choose what they eat.

Life-saving food assistance – in the form of vouchers, cash or in-kind food – is the first step to building the self-reliance of refugees, dear partners. Moreover, the availability of food or cash facilitates the Government’s vision for a coherent, integrated response.

WFP recognizes the Government’s emphasis on taking a comprehensive response approach from the onset of refugee emergencies, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Working with the Government and UNHCR, in February 2018, WFP conducted an assessment in Kenani Transit Centre and the Mantapala Refugee Camp. The assessment found that given the long-term settlement plan at Mantapala, there is need for both the refugees and Zambians in the host communities to access resources, skills and knowledge that will sustain and improve their livelihoods while building resilience.

In response to these assessment findings, WFP introduced livelihoods support to host communities in Mantapala this month. With a funding shortfall, however, we will be unable to introduce livelihoods support among the refugees themselves as planned later this year. This threatens to be the case even while we know that supporting refugees with vouchers in combination with livelihood initiatives further facilitates the process of building self-sustenance and resilience.

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

As resources become available to WFP, I’d like to pledge our commitment to collaborating with the Commissioner’s office and UN and NGO partners to deliver critical assistance to refugees in Zambia. Our donor partners, I commend you for your commitment to assisting mostly women and children fleeing the DRC into nine countries currently. WFP appeals to you to continue to demonstrate this commitment Through the refugee response in Zambia.

Thank you.