

**Talking Points of the  
President of the WFP Executive Board,  
Ambassador Ulrich Seidenberger,  
for the 2020 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of  
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP  
29 May 2020**

***The United Nations development system reform in the con-  
text of the COVID-19 pandemic***

Thank you, Mr. President.

Madam Deputy Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Principals,  
Excellencies,  
Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here with you again today in virtual format in my capacity as the President of the Executive Board of WFP.

**When discussing the UNDS reform in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the adequacy of measures to be taken in this regard, I believe it is necessary to remind ourselves always of the dimension of this global challenge:**

- **SG Guterres has described this pandemic as the greatest challenge for the international community since WW II and as gravest test for the UN System since its founding. According to him it calls for unprecedented measures in order to save lives, protect people and rebuild better.**
- **As we have heard, the health crisis is rapidly developing into a socio-economic crisis that will over the next months double the number of acutely food-insecure**

people in the world to 265 million by the end of this year.

- Globally we are talking about 1.6 billion people (20% of the world's population) – many of them in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean - who could lose their livelihoods already this year; the looming economic crisis, the deepest global recession in 90 years, could lead to a contraction of 5% of GDP globally.
- If we do not manage to mitigate the primary, secondary and tertiary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic this year, we run the risk that hundreds of millions of additional people will be thrown into chronic poverty. Immediate and massive assistance is needed now to build up resilience and prevent this devastating scenario.
- Having heard the statements of the Deputy Secretary-General as well as the principals it is refreshing to hear that a more integrated approach to respond to COVID-19 is being heralded. It is good to see that the pandemic is redoubling UN system efforts to act jointly.
- I would like to emphasize in this context three key points under the theme of continued integrated support:
- Analysis: The “UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19” is a welcome comprehensive approach addressing relevant socio-economic impact factors. It is commendable that the Framework now includes also a strong focus on food

**security, on the food systemic risks of COVID-19 as well as on the right to food.**

- **I am happy to say that the “Rome- based Membership Group of Friends for the Food Systems Summit 2021” to be established soon, will use this UN Framework as an important guidance tool in its discussions with regard to the preparation of the FSS 2021.**
- **On a more critical note, if I may: I cannot not recognize in this Framework a clear conceptual distinction or, to put it differently, I don't see the connecting dots to and the efforts for complementarity with the other components of the UN response to COVID-19, in particular with the humanitarian crisis response.**
- **That leads me to my second observation – inter-agency coordination mechanisms: in our recent Town Hall meeting I had put the question on the table, whether in this existential and unprecedented challenge posed to the UN system as a whole, it might not be necessary to consider also a further streamlining of the existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms at HQ and regional level.**
- **Having looked into this UN Framework elaborated by the UN Development System, the approach seems to be to scale up and speed up the UNDS response as much as possible. I am asking myself and this gathering: is this really sufficient and good enough or does the sheer dimension of the challenge not require an even more integrated approach?**
- **Please don't get me wrong: I am not asking for creating new coordination structures; but a stronger linkage of the UNSDG/DCO on one side and IASC/OCHA on the other side seem to me to be worthwhile to con-**

**sider in order to break up respective silo structures and sector thinking also at HQ and regional levels when it comes to the COVID-19 response of the UN system.**

- **Lastly I would like to reiterate another point I had already mentioned in our Town Hall meeting recently: the need for looking beyond the UNDS and the UN System as a whole if we want to be able to master this historical crisis: as stated then a good start could be to also include the World Bank and the IMF systematically and not only country and project related in a closer interlinked UN inter-agency coordination of DCO and OCHA.**

Thank you.