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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

WFP News Release

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WFP OPENS STRATEGIC HUBS TO AUGMENT GLOBAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

NAIROBI – Prompted by the magnitude and growing number of emergencies in recent years, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today launched a new humanitarian response "Network", with strategic hubs in Africa, Europe, Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

The Network is designed to meet the escalating challenges of sudden humanitarian emergencies which can sometimes strike almost simultaneously. Just one year ago, in Guatemala, thousands of people were victimized by the effects of Hurricane Stan and just a few days later, Pakistan was hit by a massive earthquake.

Modelled on the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Brindisi in southern Italy, each emergency hub will stock strategic supplies of relief goods and equipment, ready for transport within 24-48 hours by air and sea. Established in June 2000 and managed by WFP, the Brindisi base has provided critical support to UN agencies, governments, and NGOs during crises such as the Indian Ocean tsunami and the recent Lebanon crisis.

"With the growing number of natural disasters, aid agencies must be better prepared and better equipped to reach affected populations, as quickly as possible," said Ramiro Lopes da Silva, Director of WFP's Transport and Procurement Division. "By establishing a presence in strategic corners of the world, we are taking a key step towards enhancing further our performance in assisting those in need."

The new Network is composed of humanitarian response depots in Accra, Dubai, Panama, Malaysia and Brindisi. At the Humanitarian Development Summit which started yesterday in Nairobi, Kenya, WFP will present the new Network to relief agency counterparts and other stakeholders.

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"Over the last six years, the logistical support from the Brindisi hub made a significant difference in the speed and efficiency of emergency response as seen during crises stretching from the earthquake in Iran to conflicts in Afghanistan and Darfur," said Giuseppe Saba, UNHRD Network Coordinator. "By positioning critical supplies around the globe, there is no doubt that we will be able to help people more rapidly and more effectively – very possibly, making the difference between life and death."

Financial and in-kind support to the new Network is coming from a variety of governments and institutions, including NGOs such as the Swedish Rescue and Response Agency (SRSA) and Solidarity, a Greek NGO. TNT, the global express logistics and mail company and WFP's corporate partner, is also assisting by temporarily hosting the facility in Ghana. Since it opened in 2000, the UNHRD in Brindisi has been strongly supported by the Italian government.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency: each year, we give food to an average of 90 million poor people to meet their nutritional needs, including 58 million hungry children, in at least 80 of the world's poorest countries. **WFP -- We Feed People.**

WFP Global School Feeding Campaign – For just 19 US cents a day, you can help WFP give children in poor countries a healthy meal at school – a gift of hope for a brighter future. Visit our website: www.wfp.org

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos and photos as they are published on WFP.org. For more details see: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.

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