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PRESS RELEASE

Meeting of the Food Aid Committee, London 14 December 2010

The Food Aid Committee held its 103rd Session on 14 December 2010, under the chairmanship of Ms Leslie Norton, Director-General, International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate, CIDA, Canada.

Following a number of informal meetings and other consultations during the past year members agreed to begin the formal process of renegotiating the Food Aid Convention, 1999. The process would start with immediate effect and involve a period of intensive negotiations and further consultations over the coming months with the aim of drafting a new convention committed to providing appropriate and effective food assistance to vulnerable populations in response to needs.

During the meeting members exchanged information on recent and ongoing food emergencies, with the WFP observer providing an update on the "hunger hotspots" of Afghanistan, Chad, North Korea, Ethiopia, Haiti, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. The Committee also reviewed the current and prospective food situation in developing countries on the basis of information provided by the observer from the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the IGC Secretariat, noting in particular the surge in international prices of grains and other food crops since July 2010. Members also informed the Committee on the latest developments in their food assistance policies, including the progress made by the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) group on making national pledges transparent and encouraging countries to continue to work through this process to articulate national pledges and associated disbursements. The observer from World Trade Organisation informed the Committee of the latest position regarding the Doha Development Agenda. Consultations had been intensified recently, with the pace of work on the Draft Modalities on Agriculture having increased significantly.

Members provided updates of food assistance operations under the FAC. In the year ending June 2010, total operations had reached an estimated 7.0m. tons, below the previous year's 7.9m. but still significantly above members' combined annual FAC commitments.

Note for editors: Under the Food Aid Convention, 1999, donors pledge to provide annually specified minimum amounts or values of food aid to developing countries in the form of grains and other food products. The objective of the Convention is to contribute to world food security and to improve the ability of the international community to respond to emergency food situations and other food needs of developing countries, ensuring that food aid is directed to the alleviation of poverty and hunger of the most vulnerable groups.

The Food Aid Convention is administered by the Food Aid Committee, using the services of the IGC Secretariat. For more background information on the role and activities of the Food Aid Committee and full details of FAC operations in recent years, please see the FAC website at www.foodaidconvention.org, or contact the IGC Secretariat.