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PRESS RELEASE

Meeting of the Food Aid Committee, London, 4 June 2010

The Food Aid Committee held its biannual Session on 4 June 2010 under the chairmanship of Ms Sharon Murphy, Deputy Head of Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Ireland.

The Committee reviewed the current food situation, noting that while international prices of grains and oilseeds had fallen since early 2010, largely reflecting generally ample supplies at a global level, local market prices of key food staples in several developing countries remained high, notably in Western Africa's drought-affected Sahel region. Donors exchanged information on their responses to current food emergencies, with the observer from the World Food Programme highlighting the urgent needs of hungry people in Afghanistan, North Korea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. It was noted that three-quarters of global food aid was in response to emergencies, mostly through multilateral channels.

FAC members provided information on the latest humanitarian food assistance policy developments and were updated on recent international food security discussions. This included the outcome of the G8 Development Ministers' meeting in Halifax, Canada, which had focused on strengthening the accountability and effectiveness of development assistance, improving the health of mothers, newborns, and children under five and accelerating food security efforts, including nutrition. Donors were also informed of the recent "Dublin" dialogue with civil society on the Comprehensive Framework for Action, which included a fruitful discussion on food assistance.

Donors provided the latest information on food aid operations in the year ending June, also in relation to their obligations under the Convention.

The Committee considered the report from the Working Group on the future of the Convention, established in March 2010, which set out members' shared vision in some key areas, acknowledging that further discussions were required. Members would meet informally before the next Session in order to build on the discussions and the consensus achieved to date and to see if aspects of the consensus can be further developed and crystallised to move forward with a clear future vision. With this in mind, it was agreed to extend the Food Aid Convention, 1999 by a further year, to 30 June 2011.

Observers from India, the Republic Korea, the Russian Federation and South Africa attended the Session, as well as representatives from FAO, WFP and WTO.

The Committee appointed Ms Leslie Norton* (Canada), as its Chair in 2010/11, and warmly thanked Ms Sharon Murphy for her excellent guidance and leadership during the past year.

* Ms Leslie Norton is Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate, Multilateral and Global Programs Branch, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

** Note for editors: Under the Food Aid Convention, 1999 (FAC), 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 Committee is administered by the Secretariat of the International Grains Council (IGC). For more background information on the role and activities of the Food Aid Committee and full details of FAC operations in recent years, please consult the FAC website at www.foodaidconvention.org, or contact the IGC Secretariat.

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