



Office of the
United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator
Zimbabwe

Statement from the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Zimbabwe, Mr. J. Victor Angelo

On 30 March 2004, the Government of Zimbabwe issued an invitation to the UN Agencies FAO and WFP to field a joint mission to assess the level of food production for the 2003/2004 agricultural season.

In response, a Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) was brought into the country and was fielded on 30 April 2004. The mission was to conclude its fieldwork on 11 May 2004. It is with regret and concern that I have to put on record that on 4 May 2004 the Government of Zimbabwe recalled its field officers who were jointly participating in the assessment. Since the CFSAM is only conducted with the agreement and participation of the Government, this action effectively cancelled the mission.

Credible production figures are an essential tool for planning purposes. While the UN recognises that Government is responsible for the provision of basic needs to the country's population, we are concerned that should a food assistance need be identified later in the year, and were the Government to issue an appeal at that time, a very rapid response may not be possible for the following reasons:

- (a) The UN will not have been in a position to carry out an assessment of needs at the time of harvest - and hence the international community might be hesitant to respond; and
- (b) WFP would have scaled back operations, and would need time to build up the necessary operational capacity.

Considering the critical nature of food security, the UN sought clarification from the Government of Zimbabwe as to its position with regard to the CFSAM. The Government is yet to respond.

Harare, 11 May 2004

Office of the UN Resident Coordinator
9th Floor Takura House
67 – 69 Kwame Nkrumah Avenue
P. O. Box 4775
Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: (263 4) 792687/793051
Fax: (263 4) 792 978
E – Mail: fo.zwe@undp.org