

23 October 2008

DUTCH STEP FORWARD AGAIN TO ESCORT FOOD DELIVERIES TO SOMALIA

NAIROBI – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today welcomed the return of a Royal Netherlands Navy frigate to provide escorts for ships carrying critically needed food into Somalia and thanked the Canadian navy for providing an escort frigate since August.

The worst year for piracy off the Somali coast has made naval escorts more important than ever, with many shippers unwilling to ply the route without protection. The Dutch took over the provision of escorts from the Canadian navy on Thursday. This is the second time the Dutch have provided escorts this year – their previous tour ended in late June.

"We are again extremely grateful to the Netherlands for coming forward to assist us at a critical time," said WFP Somalia Country Director Peter Goossens. "Somalia is on a knife edge right now, and these food supplies are keeping hundreds of thousands away from death's door. Our sincere thanks as well must go to Canada for their support in recent weeks, and to NATO and the European Union for their commitment to assist us in the months ahead."

Since escorts began in mid-November last year, a succession of ships provided by France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada have secured the safe arrival of 145,000 metric tons of food in Somalia. In that time, there has not been a single hijacking of a ship carrying WFP food.

WFP is working to move a further 150,000 tons of food – enough to feed 1.5 million people for six months, into Somalia in the final three months of the year to feed some 2.4 million people in need of assistance as a result of conflict, successive failed or poor harvests, and hyperinflation.

#

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions. This year, WFP plans to feed 90 million people in 80 countries.

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.

For more information please contact (email address: firstname.lastname@wfp.org):

Peter Smerdon, WFP/Nairobi, Tel. +254 733 528 911

Gregory Barrow, WFP/Rome, Tel. +39-06-65132330, Cell. +39-3481325018,
(ISDN line available)

Caroline Hurford, WFP/London, Tel. +44-20-72409001, Cell. +44-7968-008474

Jennifer Parmelee, WFP/Washington, Tel. +1-202-6530010 ext. 1149, Cell. +1-202-4223383

Bettina Luescher, WFP/New York, Tel. +1-212-9635196, Cell. +1-646-8241112,
luescher@un.org