

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH JOSETTE SHEERAN

SUBJECT: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES THAT THREATEN THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY IN THE WORLD

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ANGELA GREILING KEANE: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Angela Greiling Keane. I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News, and Membership Secretary of the National Press Club. We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to our profession's future through our programming and by fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to our programs, please visit www.press.org/library.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and attendees to today's event, which includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists. I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. After the speech concludes, I will ask as many audience questions as time permits. I'd now like to introduce our head table guests.

From your right, if you'll stand please, as you're introduced, Mike Walter, President and CEO of Walter Media; Arshad(?) Mahmood, Washington Correspondent for BDNews24.com; Dan Glickman, former U.S. Agriculture Secretary, and now a senior fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center, who's a guest of our speaker; Myron Belkind, the National Press Club's Secretary and a professor of journalism at the George Washington University. Myron is also the Chairman of the Press Club's International Correspondence Committee; Richard Leach, the World Food Programme U.S.A. President and CEO, and

a guest of our speaker; Andrew Schneider, Chairman of the National Press Club's Speakers Committee and the Associate Editor at Kiplinger Washington Editors.

Skipping over our speaker, Alison Fitzgerald, a reporter with *Bloomberg News*, who worked on Bloomberg's Recipe for Famine Series; Lisa Gillespie, Managing Editor of *Street Sense* and also the new media director there; Andrea Snyder, a *Bloomberg News* editor; Geraldine Ryerson Cruz(?), the International News Manager for WorldVision; and Ed Mikesner(?), Editor of Kiplinger Agriculture Letter.

[applause]

Earlier this month, crusaders against global hunger, like our speaker today, received relatively good news from the United Nations. The number of people experiencing hunger worldwide fell in the past year, from 1.02 billion to a mere 925 million. That is the right direction, but it is little comfort to Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the U.N. World Food Programme.

From rebuilding Haiti to solving the riddle of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa, the organization Sheeran leads, which is the world's largest distributor of food aid to the poor, is intimately involved with aiding the lives of the so-called bottom billion. This year, the organization's goal is to reach more than 90 million people with food assistance in more than 70 countries. Around 10,000 people work for the organization. Most of them are remote areas, who are directly serving the poor.

It's a task that requires great logistic and diplomatic skills, a role for which our speaker is well prepared. Josette Sheeran became the 11th Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme in 2007. Previously, she served as Undersecretary for Economic Energy and Agriculture Affairs at the U.S. State Department, where she was responsible for economic issues, including development, trade, agriculture, finance, energy, telecommunications, and transportation.

Before joining USTR, she was Managing Director of Starpoint Solutions, a leading Wall Street technology firm, that works with Fortune 500 clients. And Sheeran's willingness to speak out on issues may come from the comfort with the media she's gained from being part of it.

The former Managing Editor of *The Washington Times* served as a Pulitzer juror and won the Press Award for Journalistic Achievement by the National Order of Women Legislators. She has also been a member of the National Press Club and even served on the Speakers Committee, which organizes the luncheon speaker series.

Today, she is discussing ten ideas that can feed the world. Welcome to the National Press Club, Josette Sheeran.

[applause]

JOSETTE SHEERAN: Well, good afternoon everyone. It's indeed a great moment to feel like I'm coming home, back to my own roots here at the National Press Club, where I spent many an hour exploring the ideas that have helped define the world that we are in today.

Today, we're going to talk about my optimism and why I believe we can end hunger. Yes, in my lifetime, in our lifetime. And, I'd like to begin by taking a journey with you to the front lines of hunger. And I'm going to start with this red cup. This is a cup from our school feeding program in Rwanda. But it's very representative of the fact that, when we talk about 925 million people who are hungry, what that means, it's about one out of every six people on Earth wake up each morning and aren't sure even how to fill this cup with food.

And, for the children we reach, often this is the only secure access to food they have in their life. Most of the people in that number are women and children. And still, today, every six seconds, a child will die from not being able to access enough food to stay alive.

My own personal awakening on this issue came in 1986. I was home with my first child, who was newborn. And I was watching an image on television of a mother in Ethiopia whose baby was crying out very weakly for food. And she had no milk in her breasts, and she also had no food. And I thought, "There can't be anything more painful than not being able to answer a child's call for food."

And what struck me at the time, and now, and then, was there was enough food in the world for everyone to get access to something to eat. During the food crisis a couple years ago, there was enough food for everyone in the world to have 2,700 kilocalories. Yet, a silent tsunami threw tens of millions of more into abject hunger.

What also struck me is the solution to hunger is not quite rocket science. Many nations have unlocked the keys. Many hungry nations have defeated hunger. And it doesn't require some great new scientific breakthrough, like discovering a cure for rare cancer. It is, on one level, quite simple. People need access to an adequate amount of nutritious food.

But, what struck me is, in Amatra(?) Sen's(?) Nobel Prize-winning economic work, *Exploring Famines and What Caused Them*, is actually famines are often caused by a lack of access to food. In fact, in the famine he studied in Bangladesh in '74, there was food. But people couldn't afford it. Their livelihoods had been destroyed by storms and other factors came together.

The other thing that always strikes me is that food is good business. When nations solve the problem, it creates value in an economy. This is not permanent charity. This is not something that ultimately needs to be propped up with help, but something that creates jobs all the way through the value chain, and opportunity. So, it's a win-win. And,

when you have a functioning food economy, not only do you end hunger, but you create wealth.

So, back to this cup. As the world's largest frontline hunger agency, being on the frontlines of Darfur, where up to over three million people a day need access to food, the Pakistan floods where 20 million people, overnight-- Well actually, over the course of a month, as the floods moved down-- threw Pakistan with 100 water breaches, kind of a Katrina every three days, to Haiti, Cambodia, and elsewhere, we solved the problem at the worst end of this challenge, those who may die tomorrow if they don't have an intervention by the world.

But I would like to say, and speak from my vantage point, that I've seen a revolution in the way that hunger is approached in just the past few years. And I think we're seeing results, including the fact that the numbers, this year, are going in the right direction, the first drop in 15 years.

And I do believe we can create sustainable models, and that new kinds of partnerships are forging and changing the face of hunger and forging solutions, that can change the dynamics of this first millennium goal. In fact, just a few weeks ago, in Rome where our headquarters are, we had the Prime Minister of Cape Verde-- And Cape Verde is a small nation off the coast of Africa. Other than its great resource of its people, it has no natural resources. And, in fact, when it reached independence, many predicted that it could not survive as a nation. It has droughts. It has many, many difficulties.

But, we celebrated Cape Verde graduating from needing the support of the World Food Programme, and the fact that it will reach the millennium development goal of halving the proportion of hunger, and most of the other millennium development goals, overcoming illiteracy and hunger, including with its young people.

And so, that hopefulness is critical. I think we also all must be imbued with a strong sense of purpose. In fact, it was 50 years ago this month that President Eisenhower gave a speech foretelling the founding of the World Food Programme, and really saying one of the things we learned from the Marshall Plan is that you can't have peace and stability without food security.

And I will tell you that, when I testified on the European Parliament, I had this red cup. And the Head of the Development Committee became very emotional. And he said the last time he had seen this cup was after World War Two in Spain when his family was facing starvation.

When I went to Japan, I met with the Minister there in the government. And he became very emotional over this cup. And he said the last time he saw it was after World War Two, when the United States reached out a hand of help as people faced starvation in Japan.

And so, this cup moves through the world, transforming lives and presenting opportunities. What we do know is that people don't have food, they only really have three options. They can migrate. They can revolt. Or face starvation and death. Neither of these are optimal. And so, I think we must be driven with a common purpose to solve the problem.

I want to just mention, up front, a really profound thanks to the United States. Since that speech by Eisenhower, and since the founding of Food for Peace by President Kennedy, there has been profound leadership in the United States in fighting hunger, bipartisan agreement, and activism throughout our land.

Gandhi once said to a hungry man, "A piece of bread is a face of God." And I see America inspired to really intervene, when children, out of living-- being born in a place with a dictatorship or a bad government, or that's at war, or a victim of disasters does not have access to that food.

But, in particular, I want to thank President Obama. We saw a complete turnaround at LaQuila (?) at the G8 Summit, to make food security the top item following the food crisis, very necessary, such as the action in '74 to rally the world behind us. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave big leadership in New York last week. I'll talk a little bit more about that, about the particular problem of children under two, and how to revolutionize their access to adequate nutrition.

Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack feels this very personally. In his own life, he has felt food insecurity and is a great advocate for this. And, Raul Schabb(?), the new head of AID, one of the most innovative leaders we've seen on the food security issues. And I just want to recognize a number of people from the Department of Agriculture, AID, John Brouse,(?) who's been a leader in this, and the whole team's here today.

But also, on Capitol Hill, Joanne Emerson, McGovern, Delora(?), Senators Durbin, Cole, Brownback, Pack, Roberts, all of these people are actually known in the field. In fact, I was in a school in Kenya. And I just stopped by a third grade class that gets school feeding from the United States, and asked if they had any questions.

And a little girl said, "How is McGovern-Dole?" And I said, "How is what?" And she said, "McGovern-Dole, is he okay? Because if not, I can't go to school." And I thought, "Wow, you know." And they talked about this as a powerful far-off tribe that can help them. But the connection's so profound to the lives of those children.

The U.S. is first in fighting hunger in the world. And I will just say that 70% of those reached in Darfur are reached by the United States. And I will not dwell on it here, but there has been a retooling of the way the United States reaches the hungry with food. And, in our world, where we are in such deep partnership, we've seen the lead time in the ability to reach those on the front line with the contributions from the U.S. reduced to three days in Pakistan. Very quick action. And again, innovations by the team and by everyone working on this.

But today, I want to talk about ten actions that really are new approaches, that can help unleash permanent solutions to food. I will just say, because I know I have friends here from the agricultural business, I'm not talking about the input side. The access side to food. I will presume we will all take care of the need for greater production. It's very important. And our partners at FAO and EFAD(?) and others work on this.

The first is the world's commitment to humanitarian action. The change of approach in that action is very critical. Today, we can say, with pretty much accuracy, that we have tools that will respond with the appropriate action in a humanitarian situation. If it's a place like Darfur, where there is no food, we will bring in the food. If it's a place like some places in Haiti right now, where there are some food markets after the earthquake, but people have no cash, we can bring in a voucher or cash.

We can do humanitarian action even up front, in a way that will support the recovery of markets and be sensitive to their strengths. It's dangerous. A couple summers ago, 34 of our drivers were kidnapped and missing in action in Darfur. We lose people regularly. I lost one of our staff trying to fill this exact type of cup in Somalia, was shot right through the head trying to do so. Why? Because some people would prefer that people don't get access to food.

So, this is a very important protection action. We need the support of the world. Every penny we raise is voluntarily raised. But, if we can prevent people from falling through the floor of resiliency, selling off all their cattle, selling off their homes, pulling kids out of school, they'll do anything to eat, if we can prevent that, and that's what emergency action does. It saves lives and protects livelihoods. This is the foundation for recovery and long-term sustainability.

The second thing I would like to mention is the power of school meals. This is a very simple idea that the United States really brought to the world, that if you provide a cup of food in school, you provide a safety net for children that is affordable and that has so many other benefits, particularly for girls.

We see, in our school feeding programs around the world, that if you put a cup of food in school, and attach a take-home ration for perfect attendance, such as a bag of rice, or one jug of oil, something the U.S. has supported around the world, the numbers of girls in school will skyrocket. And, in places where girls don't go to school, their parents are suddenly ordering them to go to school, for the economic benefit. It helps the family.

So, the girl's job is to go to school. Meanwhile, she's learning. And, if we sustain that, she will stay in school until she is 16 and get married later. We need not talk about all the knock-on benefits of that happening, but they're profound. And it is a very powerful tool. In fact, in our new book with the World Bank, called *Rethinking School Feeding*, it really recommends that this is the best safety net to put in place for countries that cannot afford more complex systems, and that the results are proven.

But the most exciting thing about school feeding is that, in the 45 years the World Food Programme has been doing this, 34 countries have completely graduated from the program. And, in fact, I was just talking to Myron Belkind before we came up. He was posted as a reporter in India in 1966. 500 million people, many of them sustained by the food aide brought in from the United States and the World Food Programme. Today, of course, India is a contributor to ours. And they've built that food security.

But I have a list, here, of the 34 nations, including Morocco last year, Jordan, that have graduated from the program and run it. And, therefore, a sustainable solution, and one that benefits those economies.

The third idea is safety nets. That doesn't sound like a bold idea in the United States. But 80% of the world has no safety net. When disaster hits or a financial crisis or a food crisis, there is no backup plan. And one would think, "Well, civil society." I talked to an ambassador from an African country who's posted in Rome. She remembers her childhood, spent much of it competing with the cows for blades of grass, because no one in the community, including the churches, had any food.

And so, in countries that are so poor there is no backup plan, but what we have found, and I have just spent a lot of time in Brazil studying their model, is you can put into place a food safety net that is linked to the schools, to local farmers. In Brazil, it's linked to good grades. It's linked to vaccinations. And it costs half a percent of GDP. And Brazil feels this was their resiliency net during the food and financial crisis.

Today, Brazil is beating hunger faster than any nation on Earth, according to a number of studies. And this is an affordable way to do it. But it's also economically based and creating opportunity for small farmers and building an educated, well-nourished population.

So, we feel the World Food Programme has been partnering with Brazil to share this idea, South South(?), and to build in these kind of safety nets that, when disaster hits, the world is called on later in the game and only when it's of great magnitude.

Again, even in the U.S. during the financial crisis, I know we have hunger. We have hunger in the U.S. And it's something we always have to keep in mind. And it even moves me more that the U.S. is so generous to help those, even in worse shape in other places in the world.

But we also have built, over many years, that safety net of religious institutions and community food banks and great organizations like Bread for the World, who spoke here, and others, in addition to our programs such as SNAP that the Department of Agriculture and others run.

The fourth idea is connecting small farmers to market. WFP actually is very new in this business, because today, over half of our budget is cash. And, with that cash, over 80% of it we spend buying food from the developing world. Over half of the people in

the developing world who need help, who don't have enough to eat, are small farmers, most of them women. Because in many places, like Africa, 80% of the agricultural work is done by women.

But we now purchase-- We're one of the largest purchasers in the developing world of food. But, what we have discovered is you can purchase from markets in the developing world and never affect the life of the small farmer. They are not getting the benefit, necessarily, of their labor on the markets. Why? Find me a small farmer in Africa that has any place to store their food, and you'll have shown me something I have yet to find.

And so, when they harvest, if they don't sell within a few days, that food will be rotten and lost. And we know we have post-harvest losses of about 40% in most of Africa and much of the developing world. Well today, in partnership with the Gates Foundation and the Howard Buffett Foundation, and now nations coming on board to help us, the World Food Programme is not only buying locally, but buying from small farmers, in 19 nations.

And I will tell you the power of this is huge. I just got back from Gulu in Uganda, a place that has suffered so much. This was the birthplace of the Lord's Resistance Army. It was the ground zero of the Ebola virus and other things. There wasn't a warehouse anywhere to be found.

And so, in this place where many thousands of people had been dependent on food aide for over 20 years, WFP, with the support of the U.S. and Japan, has put up a warehouse. A warehouse that can receive grain, clean it, dry it, and bag it. This is the most exciting thing that has happened in this community. I tell you, I was there, the celebration over this. And the farmers bring in the food. When I opened one of the first bags I opened, there was a shoe in it, and a few mice, and all of that. [laughter] But it comes out of that system, and it is beautiful, tradable, East African, grade A quality maize.

And, the farmers, if they could sell it, because without drying, it's already rotting from inside. If they could sell it on local markets, it maybe would get \$100 dollars a metric ton. We charge them for the processing service. It's a business model. That's the point, right, is a sustainable solution.

When it comes out, after \$40 dollars of servicing, they get the lowest price on the markets that day, was \$400 dollars a metric ton. That is opportunity creation. That's kids going to school. That's people being able to buy better seed. That's people being able to change their lives. And the farmers know it.

And so, we buy for our program, from them. And we're doing this in many countries, a very powerful tool that is reaping results much faster. I'm looking at Howard Buffett Jr., there. Then, in our early discussions, we thought. And, it was in great demand around the world.

The fifth idea is the first 100 days, first 1,000 days. You will hear a lot about this. This is the time from gestation to two years old. And all the evidence is in, that if children in that zone do not receive adequate nutrition, the damage is permanent. This was put forth in *Lancet* two years ago. It's compelling evidence. And, in fact, I think it's WorldVision that has a presentation with the x-rays of children's brains, the places that never light up.

And so, now we have what I call the burden of knowledge. If we don't act-- And so, in Haiti, after that earthquake, it's not easy to pledge, as we had as an institution, that in emergencies, we will reach those kids first. In Pakistan-- But this is where some of the most exciting partnership potential comes in. And I just want to show this.

This is a highly nutritious, ready-to-use food we produce in Pakistan. It's made with chickpeas and dried milk. And it's fortified with lots of nutrients. It is kind of a sweet hummus. This can protect a child's brain and body. This is what I call a climate-proof food. You don't have to refrigerate it. You don't have to add water. You open it, you squeeze it in a kid's mouth, and their brain and body will be protected.

This is an era of needing new tools. In some cases, it's just not going to cut it for a kid two years old to get a bowl of rice when they've been deprived of nutrition. It's not going to protect them. So, we're calling on all the nutrition companies in the world. We're already partnering with many, and research institutes. And we're working with University of Mississippi and others, and AID and others, to really develop a new generation of tools.

For those of us who can go to Whole Foods and get power bars with every possible mix, I guarantee you, for the bottom billion, there is not a product available. That, if your child's weak, that you can buy out there, at an affordable cost. And so, right now, you will find the face of nutrition changing.

But the key is to make sure that we do this. We know that children, from studies, will earn 50% less if they're not nourished under two, later in life, than they would have if they were nourished, same group of kids. We know the loss to economy can be 11% of GDP. So, this is an investment. And that's why I was so excited to see a Secretary of State leading this effort, and finance ministers. Tim Geithner was involved in the launch of Feed the Future, because it's good for countries and their GDP to invest in these things.

Six ideas empowering women. I'll go through this very quickly. But it is not really an overstatement to say, "Feed a woman and you feed the world." Women produce 50% of the food in the world. They get dramatically less of the training. But, when you train them, studies show that yields will rise up to 22%, very short time. And also, that the children will get access to food. There will be a fairer distribution of food.

And so, in our camps and elsewhere, we make sure women get the vouchers so they can reach their children. And we also work to make sure-- I'm just going to show

this. This isn't edible. This is a briquette made with biomass so they can cook the food without leaving and unfortunately facing rape and beating, as we see in Darfur and other places.

So, giving women the power to feed their families safely is not that difficult. And, in fact, in Darfur, we've done this with a business model. The stoves are made with earthenware. These are made by the women. They sell them for a couple pennies. And, the women don't have to go, now, ten kilometers out in Darfur to get wood. And the average time they go without being beaten or raped is two weeks, max. So, this is something. Total cost to deal with that problem in the world is about \$7 million dollars, to make sure safe access to firewood, to cooking products.

The seventh is the technology revolution. Technology can revolutionize the face of hunger. I will just give a few examples. Today, in Syria, the refugees from Iraq, which were not being very welcome, they're integrated in the community. Today, they get a voucher from us on a cell phone to spend in a local store. The storekeepers love it. The farmers love it. It saves money. And, even in the places in Syria where there aren't stores, we have a mobile shop that comes up. Private sector business to connect to those refugees.

In Zambia, a hugely innovative voucher program, again, giving storekeepers and farmers access to the solution. But, even for us, the World Food Programme spends less than 0.01% of its money on publicity and press. We want to get everything we can into this cup. Our overhead is 7% by agreement with the world.

So, we went on YouTube and asked the world-- We set up a competition to produce hunger videos so we'd have tools to underscore our battle against hunger, and had thousands of entries of great videos. We couldn't afford to make one. These solutions-- I'll tell you about a few other technology solutions.

But we have a dream, which is to use technology to connect the billion people in the world who have too much food to the billion people in the world who don't have enough. It's a 25 cent-a-day solution. We can wait until everyone is under good governance in the world. Or we can decide, citizen-to-citizen, to at least make sure everyone has a cup of food. This could virtually happen overnight. Billion online users that have enough food connecting to the billion that don't. So, rethink the potential where technology is used.

The eighth thing I will mention is building resiliency. We are seeing the number of natural disasters go up exponentially. And I will just give one example of this. In the early '90s, the World Food Programme, instead of just handing out food aide in Timbuktu, Mali, worked with the community to use it as an investment bank, and had the people of Timbuktu plant 40,000 trees to block a desert, the Timbuktu Desert, which is taking over everything, from the rice fields.

I went there recently. Those rice fields are so protected and yielding so much that all they wanted was a machine to pack the rice and sell it, because they had more than they could eat. I guarantee you, if that resiliency effort was not put in place, it wouldn't happen.

And so, mitigating risk, preparing for climactic problems, we've done that same type of product in Ethiopia, at huge scale, restoring 800,000 hectares of land over time, and supporting that many people to be able to eat. So, we think there is tremendous power in community-based solutions to the climatic problems that are being faced.

The ninth is partnerships. This is an area we couldn't do what we do without the private sector. TNT, one of the great delivery companies in the world, has helped us with warehouse efficiency. A 6% more efficient warehouse can get more money to save those kids and work with them. DSM, the great nutrition company, has helped us in-- This is a date bar we brought to Qatar-- I mean, to Gaza to amp up the nutrition to meet the specific needs of the children there.

Again, we don't have that expertise. We're also linked with Unilever, Kraft, Heinz, on a great project in Bangladesh called Project Laser Beam. In Dubai, the humanitarian city, supported by Sheikh Mohammad and Princess Haya(?) is a powerful addition to this. And again, I just want to mention-- I see the great Johanna Newman here-- the CSIF partnership of Johanna Nesbit(?), I'm sorry-- And our millennium village partnerships that really can change the way we do things.

The ninth thing is the power of individuals to change the face of hunger. In Haiti, the needs were huge. We were a little bit desperate to raise the money very quickly for what we needed. And we talked to Zengo, one of the online games companies. And they had their game Farmville give high energy biscuits to the farmers. Every time someone contributed, then they'd get, I don't know, a boost on the score or something. Within days, Farmville raised enough money to deliver five million meals to kids in Haiti. Again, very powerful potential.

And one great story is freerice.com. For those of you who haven't been on it, there was an individual in Indiana who wanted to make a difference in fighting hunger. He created a game online, a word game that, if you get the definition of the word right, ten grains of rice drop into a bowl. And advertisers support, donating that rice to the World Food Programme. Today, billions of grains of rice have been raised and have fed kids all over the world, by the one idea that was born in the freerice.com game, now in several languages, and used by many to prepare for SAT tests and elsewhere. And what a great way to solve hunger.

And tenth is Not On My Watch, the importance of leadership and the right policies. We can say all of these things. But hunger will not be defeated until a leader of a nation says, "A child will not die under my watch. And I will put the right policies in place to make sure we can defeat hunger."

And so, we know, 20 years ago, China was WFP's biggest project. Today, they contribute to WFP. Today, India contributes to WFP. Today, Brazil does, even though they were one of our biggest projects just a few decades ago.

In his address in becoming the Head of the African Union, the President of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, said that in five years, no child in Africa would die from hunger. That type of leadership has mobilized Africa to figure out the action steps to get that done. This can change the face of hunger in the world.

As was opened here, we've seen the numbers on hunger going down. But it's still 925 million too many. But I do believe we're at a tipping point, where we can harness the power of partnerships, technology, political will, and individual commitment, and hunger. Thank you.

[applause]

KEANE: Thank you. We've had a lot of questions. That's a great thing. How likely is it that the number of hungry people in the world will continue to decline? And, what's the biggest danger that may make it increase once again?

SHEERAN: Well, the world needs to produce 50% more food in the coming decades. The population is growing. And this has been one of the great challenges. So, until recent years, we've seen productivity going up, prices going down. But we've seen a reversal of that in recent years.

We have a challenge on how to sustain enough affordable food production for the world. And we saw, during the food crisis, that if you have energy prices really high at the same time as you're having a financial or food issue, these things can begin to interact in a way-- And, if you remember when oil was more than \$100 dollars a barrel, it became affordable to burn pretty much anything to produce fuel.

So, I think we have very major challenges in making sure that we have access to food for all people. But, again, I think the type of global action, as led by the G8 and the G20 and others, keeping it top of the agenda. This is a win-win situation. I think the time has come, by the way, for the African farmer. The world cannot reach that goal without the African farmer having the investment needed. And so, I think the opportunity is as great as the dangers.

KEANE: What is the one most important thing that the U.S. government can do to combat hunger?

SHEERAN: Well, I think leadership. I mean, the U.S. now has turned from a nation that, at one point, struggled with hunger issues and malnutrition issues, to a nation that exports one out of every three acres of food that it makes. So, we produce more than we need to sustain our own nation.

But the leadership of being able to share that knowledge and the technologies to help the world feed itself is very key. And, I think the leadership to demonstrate that this isn't just a good moral cause, this is good for business. This is good for finance. It's good for investment. It's good for education, all of those issues.

So, I love the whole of government approach being taken in Feed the Future. And I think it's exactly what we need. The other thing is to sustain the incredible commitment in reaching those who fall through the cracks. And the United States gives over a billion dollars a year to help those who would be lost without an intervention. And we just want to thank America because the support for that is widespread and bipartisan.

KEANE: What is the role that corruption plays in hunger? And, in which countries is corruption the biggest problem right now?

SHEERAN: Well, again, there is no reason why some countries should not be able to feed themselves. We see corruption, we see bad policies, we see, frankly, governments that don't care. It is not top of mind that some of their people are not eating. Or, we see people actually forced away from food, due to discrimination or conflict.

So, we think all of those factors play a big role. Really, the moral question that we all have to ask ourselves is, if a child is trapped under a situation, where there's a corrupt government or one that wants them to be starved out, for whatever reasons, should that child pay for that? And I will just say, some of the places we work are some of the most challenging in the world, like Somalia, where in most of the places, is extremely dangerous. And women and children and their needs are not high on the list of what's happening there.

So, it really requires the world being willing to stand by those in the most difficult situations. And we need that support; because often, we're really in very dangerous environments like that.

KEANE: In your role, are you willing and/or able to confront leaders in countries where corruption is the biggest problem, either in public or private, to take them on in that challenge?

SHEERAN: Well for us, we typically control our own food lines and distribution. We require that. WFP has a zero fraud policy. If someone in our staff has falsified a record or done anything wrong, or something disappears, or one of our partners, they get fired. We have to do that.

But, we do not hand food over to governments that are corrupt, or any governments, frankly. We run our own accountability systems. We certainly, in the places where we work, I have very strong discussions with government, especially those that are capable of feeding their own people, that they need to take responsibility for that.

We have partners in the U.N. that deal more with the big policy issues on corruption and for policies. But for us, it's really compelling moral issues, that children should not be dying under their watch, and really raising awareness of that.

KEANE: This summer, we saw our first significant food riots in nearly two years in Mozambique. Are there other potential riot spots? And, where is unrest most likely? And, why is that?

SHEERAN: I remember, during the food crisis, one of the leaders of Liberia, that has just come out of 20 years of civil war, devastating situation, refugee population, many, many people dependent on the goodwill of the world to stay alive. And they've come out with a great leader, President Johnson Sirleaf.

And they were saying, during the food crisis, when prices doubled and tripled overnight, that in Liberia, there is no public opinion polls. The only poll is the price of food. And this is true in many nations. The price of food is high. What's our government doing? The price of food is good, and people can afford to eat, then it's a sign that things are going well.

What struck me during the food crisis is Liberia was experiencing the knock on effects of forces outside of Liberia, at 70% food dependence. So, it was buying from global markets. And, at one point, there wasn't even food to buy. They didn't have enough cash to compete with those who could put more cash on the table for food.

So, I think-- and what we saw in Mozambique, there was a combination of factors that drove the price of food up, including energy prices. But we know that this is about stability of governments. What it took in Liberia to stabilize that situation was a \$14 million dollar investment, to make sure kids had food in school.

And it really cooled things down. And this is where I think quick global action, to be able to support nations hit with these things, can really help avoid many years of struggle and strife. The civil war in Liberia, the cause that started the trouble, was the price of food 20 years earlier. So, very important to watch.

KEANE: What has been the biggest humanitarian aid challenge you're facing right now in Pakistan?

SHEERAN: Well, massive. Massive challenge, on every level. First of all, we are seeing natural disasters at a scale that is just not in memory. And so, if you could imagine, in Pakistan, it's a size bigger than the country of Italy that was under water. Again, over the course of the month, 100 water breaches.

And so, we had a new humanitarian disaster of huge scale, virtually every day breaking, as this water moved down toward the sea from Northern Pakistan. But, I was just there recently. This is the weakest population I've seen. This is a population deeply poor already. And the women are suffering terribly.

We have seen a lot of generosity. In fact, the United States announced-- has given \$125 million dollars to help reach the people there with urgent help. But, by and large, we are not seeing the levels of giving from the world or online that we saw in Haiti. So, we're very worried about needing to get the attention of the world for this disaster.

There are over 10 million people that have officially been assessed as not having food. The World Food Programme is reaching six million of them. But they've missed the harvest. The next planting season possible is April. And so, we're talking about a year of people really dependent on the goodwill of the world to be able to survive. So, we're worried about the sustainability, the disease outbreak, and the weak state of the children that we saw there.

KEANE: There's a lot of questions about lots of different countries. We'll try to touch on as many places as we can. One we got a couple questions on is Russia, which has an export ban on wheat until next year. How will that ban affect hunger worldwide? And, in general, what are the effects of export bans on food availability?

SHEERAN: Well, fortunately, I think we'll weather the storm of the Russia ban right now, because of good harvests in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. What we saw during the food crisis in '07 and '08 was a drought in Australia affecting supply, driving up price, and then a whole series of kind of negative market reactions, such as hoarding, closing down exports, that all began to feed on themselves into really creating a difficult situation.

We think that the situation is quite different right now. And Jacques Diouf at FAO really has been a leading voice on this. But, just to report what they have said, we've seen stocks rebuilt. When the food crisis hit in '07, emergency stocks were at an all-time low in the world, because everyone had been drawing down. The world had been consuming, in part, for energy use, more than it produced for the few years before.

So, we're seeing stocks rebuilt. We're seeing some good harvests elsewhere, that can help compensate. Having said that, we're in a new world. And I will explain it to you. When I first came to the World Food Programme in '03, we would check and adjust our commodity prices about once a year/once every two years. That's how slow things would move.

And they would always pretty much go in the right direction. We'd be able to buy more food for less, with greater ease, around the world. In June '07, when I first said we may be facing the perfect storm, we were seeing prices going up about 10% every three months. And we thought, "Wow, we better watch this quarterly." Things were moving so fast.

Then, in that summer, the prices started going up 10% a month, until they doubled by January of '08. And we started watching them monthly. Today, we're watching them daily. And I'm getting, on my Blackberry, the reports of swings. This is good. This is

because the world's on high alert. We now will not get taken by surprise as much as the whole world did with that quick change there.

This is to say that there are new mechanisms in place, including the Secretary General's high level panel within the U.N., of all the food-related agencies coming together to monitor this. I will host, with Bob Zoellick, the President of the World Bank, on Friday, a special experts meeting on what are we seeing and what does it mean. Are we seeing, again, this dynamic?

So, we're on the case. We think the structural issues are different. But, we're not taking anything for granted. When I was in Darfur, one gentleman said, "We have one philosophy: Trust God, but tie down your camel." And so, we're in the "tie down the camel" mode right now. [laughter]

KEANE: Looking into the U.S., there's a focus, this election year, by a lot of candidates on cost-cutting. What could that mean for programs like yours, that are seeking more money from countries, including the U.S.?

SHEERAN: Well, we think at the World Food Programme it is absolutely critical to demonstrate that we can deliver effectively, efficiently, and with controls. It has been our philosophy not to spend a lot on promotion, but to spend a lot on trying to get the fundamentals right.

This obviously becomes extremely difficult in places like Somalia, where they kill people that try to deliver food, often. But, it is something that is steeped into our whole structure and culture. So, we're the only institution in the U.N. that's held to a 7% cap on our overhead. This really forces us to be very efficient and drive things down, to make sure we're delivering food to kids with the majority of our money.

But also, these new innovative ways of dealing with the challenge. Not every situation requires us bringing food from long distances. Some do. Some do. But not every situation does. So, if we can use a voucher or cell phone, and it can be more efficient and more effective, that's critical.

The second thing, we want to show sustainability, and that we're able to hand over to communities their own ability to build their food self-sufficiency. And the third thing, we want to see nations taking responsibility. That's where it should start. And so, I think all three of those, that's why we had the celebration with Cape Verde.

It's why we're looking at alternatives in places where we have refugees, to more efficient ways of delivery, and why we, again, watch our own cost-cutting measures. We've been able, in Sudan, to cut down our program tremendously, by refocusing and retargeting it, and providing savings. We feel these actions are critical.

KEANE: The Obama administration has made domestic nutrition one of their key issues. Of course, focusing attention on places like right here in disadvantaged parts

of Washington, D.C. How would you compare and contrast the administration's focus on domestic nutrition with its commitment to world hunger issues?

SHEERAN: Well, I think leadership always starts at home. And the U.S., it was actually after World War Two when the U.S. realized that half the recruits were malnourished coming in to sign up for military service, that the U.S. really got on the case of malnourishment and its cost to society.

I will just say, I spend most of my time overseas. But I have seen a very serious and sober attitude in the U.S. toward the challenges we face in the U.S., including, I know, repositioning the food stamps with the SNAP program, with a greater focus on nutrition. I think that's very powerful.

I also think Michelle Obama's leadership on nutrition. I tell my nutritionist friends, "Nutrition is now cool." No one talked to them a few years ago. They're used to being in their own little place. They're really more like scientists than being used to having the big public stage. But nutrition, now, both for those who can't afford enough food, but those who can and are malnourishing themselves, we're losing touch with our understanding about what to eat and how to properly nourish ourselves.

So, we have a challenge, both in the poor world and the rich world, and those who are challenged in America in having enough food, and those who have too much food. I just want to give you one small example. In Japan-- You can tell I'm a fan of school lunches. And I go to them all over the world. I've eaten lunch with kids all over the world.

Japan has the oldest school feeding program in the world, founded in 1890. And it's a course in school. And the kids have to construct the menu. And they have to be able to have certain amounts of each vitamin and proteins and oils and all of that. And, if they don't get it right, they flunk. And, if they do, they get an A in the course. But the nutrition education is quite profound. And so, they embed that with the lunch program.

That type of thing, including really looking at the content of what our kids are getting, as Michelle Obama is and other leaders in the U.K. and elsewhere, it is very important.

KEANE: Got a couple questions on journalism. We'll get one in here quick. How can journalists better cover hunger issues? And, what are some particularly good examples of news coverage you've seen on the issue?

SHEERAN: I think during the financial crisis, we saw some profound reporting. We have a reporter here from *Bloomberg* who was part of a great series, really looking at the nature of hunger and famine, and the dynamics behind it in the global economy. This is very important. And the *Financial Times* did a great job being on the case of the food crisis early on.

There has been some books, recently, about what drives hunger, and the relationship between global markets and local markets. I think that's very important. I also think it's very important that journalists get out to the frontlines and understand what vulnerability is.

Most people think, when we talk about vulnerable people, you know, it's a debate, and wow. Well, you know, maybe they don't have meat and potatoes. But, when they see a kid-- And during the food crisis, when we had half as much food for the same amount of money, we were serving kids for a while half a cup of food.

And we found them taking a fourth of it home to their brothers and sisters. That kind of story is often not accessed by the press to let people understand the nature of the result of the giving and the support for it. So, I think it's important to connect that.

I also find, in humanitarian situations, you know, you saw in Haiti. If we went one day with a kid without food, just the outrage in the press. And I share the outrage. But the understanding of food supply chains, and how you actually reach people, and what these humanitarian efforts take, is very important.

So, we're really advocating for some frontline effort with the press, to really come out and understand the nature of the humanitarian operation, so they can also accurately report what's happening in the whole effort, to make sure people are reached with lifesaving goods.

But we need to bring attention to it. And I think there should be a lot more attention to the huge program that the U.S. is leading in the world, to help change the face of hunger.

KEANE: Well, we're almost out of time. But before asking the last question, we have a couple of important matters to take care of. First of all, we'd like to present you with the traditional National Press Club mug, as a token of our appreciation.

SHEERAN: Okay. [laughter/applause] I'll put them together.

KEANE: Not quite big enough to feed you for a whole day. I'd also like to remind our members and guests of our upcoming speakers. On September 30th, we have Senator John Cornin, Chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, and Senator Robert Menendez, with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. On October 6th, Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner of the FDA. And on October 8th, we have Brian Moynihan, President and CEO of Bank of America.

For our last question, one of our audience members asked, once you solve the world hunger issue, can you fix your alma mater, the *Washington Times*? [laughter]

SHEERAN: Well, I was thinking of maybe a week off or something. [laughter] Yeah. Well, you know, I keep saying our goal is to put the World Food Programme out of

business. You know, it should be the goal of everyone who is running an aid program not to perpetuate ourselves. We're there as a bridge. I am not sure it will happen in the next 24 months or so, or the next few years. But, that is the goal that I aim for. And, I'll give it my all, as long as I can.

KEANE: Great.

[applause]

KEANE: Well, thank you to Josette Sheeran for being with us today. Thank you for coming. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff including this library and broadcast center, for organizing today's event. For more information about joining the Press Club, and how to acquire a copy of today's program, please visit our website at www.press.org. We are adjourned. Thank you.

[gavel]