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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

Press Release

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WFP LAUNCHES "FOOD FORCE" THE FIRST "HUMANITARIAN" VIDEO GAME

Bologna, Italy -- A plane circles over a crisis zone. War. Drought. People are hungry. The aircraft goes into a steep climb before launching its first airdrop of food aid. A truck struggles up a muddy, treacherous road, and rebels loom. People are anxious, waiting and food is scarce.

This is the virtual world of "Food Force". Not an action film, but the first humanitarian video game about global hunger unveiled today by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) at the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna, Italy.

"Communicating with children today means using the latest technology," said Neil Gallagher, WFP's Director of Communications. "Children in the developed world don't know what it's like go to bed threatened by starvation. In an exciting and dynamic form, Food Force will generate kids' interest and understanding about hunger, which kills more people than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined."

While playing the game's six different missions alongside Food Force's crack team of emergency aid workers, children aged 8 to 13 will be faced with a number of realistic challenges to quickly feed thousands of people in the fictitious island of Sheylan – piloting helicopters on reconnaissance missions, negotiating with armed rebels on a convoy run, and using food to help rebuild villages.

The PC based video game is available as a free internet download from www.food-force.com. It is currently available in English, with translation into other languages planned.

The video game format, rather than traditional educational game technology, has the attraction of full screen video and 3D imagery. The www.food-force.com website is designed with a dedicated area for kids to post their high scores. "How to Help" section provides ideas on fundraising and community involvement.

For educators, WFP has teamed up with the "Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger" web site to provide downloadable teachers lesson packs in multiple languages.

“Food Force is a game that parents will encourage their children to play at home, and that teachers will find stimulating to use in the classroom,” said Gallagher. “So many parents complain about the blood and gratuitous violence that kids are so frequently exposed to in video games, this is a fun and action packed alternative.”

Based in Rome, Italy, the World Food Programme is the world’s largest humanitarian agency. It is active on the frontlines of more than 80 countries in order to feed some 90 million people each year. Through emergency relief to hot meals in schools, WFP’s vision is to end hunger which stalks more than 800 people in the world today.

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For more information on Food Force or WFP, please see: www.wfp.org

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