I. Key Messages

1. The severe food and nutrition crisis affecting nine countries in the Sahel region of West Africa is worsening and needs are rising sharply. More than 18 million people in nine countries are facing food insecurity. A million children under 5 are at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition. Successive droughts, combined with conflict and displacement, have pushed people into crisis. In Niger, the number of people affected by food insecurity more than doubled between February and April.

2. Insecurity and conflict are exacerbating the crisis and making access more difficult, particularly in northern Mali. So far, some 370,000 people have been displaced by the continuing conflict there. Around half of these have fled to Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, countries that are already struggling to cope with food insecurity. We are now facing new logistical challenges, including the risk of epidemics brought on by seasonal rains and the possibility of an infestation of desert locusts in the western Sahel.

3. So far, we have received 42 per cent of the $1.6 billion we need to respond to the crisis. Governments and humanitarian agencies have been working to support people in need since the alarm was raised last year, with nutrition programmes, direct food distributions and cash-for-work and food-for-work projects. These are having an impact, but without continued support, the progress made could be lost very quickly.

4. In the medium- and long-term, we are investing in building resilience into families and communities by improving access to food and water and supporting income-generating projects. We are committed to ending the cycle of increasing need and dependency by working to save both lives and livelihoods. Without this, people risk falling back into chronic poverty and malnutrition as soon as the crisis is lifted.