Treasury, African Ambassadors Discuss Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, Urge New Donors to Come Forward

Some 25 Countries Expected to Apply for Second Wave of Food Security Funds

7/30/2010

TG-798

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury today announced that Under Secretary for International Affairs Lael Brainard, along with Sylvia Mathews Burwell, president of the Global Development Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, met with ambassadors and embassy officials from more than a dozen African countries to discuss the increased demand for assistance from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), a new fund to tackle global hunger and poverty. GAFSP grants help countries with vulnerable populations to increase food security, raise rural incomes and reduce poverty.

In October, approximately $120 million will be available for allocation to countries eligible for the GAFSP. More than 25 countries are expected to apply for assistance. Funding will be prioritized for those countries that demonstrate the highest levels of need, the strongest policy environments and the greatest level of country readiness - as measured by the completion of an agricultural development strategy and country investment plan. This follows the fund's first round of grants awarded in June to Bangladesh, Haiti, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo totaling $224 million.

"For the first time in our history, more than one billion people are food insecure. Simply put, the need is great and resources are limited," said Under Secretary Brainard. "Today, we are calling on our international partners in the G-20 to come forward and stand with us in this important effort."

Launched in April 2010 with $880 million in commitments from the United States, Canada, South Korea, Spain, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GAFSP represents a global effort to aid vulnerable populations afflicted by hunger and poverty and is a key element of the Obama Administration's initiative to enhance food security in poor countries.

"Sierra Leone is proud to be receiving funds from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program," said Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the United States, Bockari Stevens. "These funds will be indispensable to Sierra Leone's efforts to support its small-scale farmers and help them escape poverty."

It is estimated that the sudden increase in food prices in 2008 drove 100 million people into poverty. Even before the food price spikes, 850 million people in poor countries were chronically malnourished. GAFSP seeks to improve food security and reduce poverty by delivering rapid and predictable financing for the agriculture sector in low-income countries.

The fund was created in response to a call by G-20 Leaders in Pittsburgh last year for the World Bank Group to work with interested donors to set up a multi-donor trust fund to implement some of the $22 billion in pledges made by G-8 Leaders at their meeting in L'Aquila.

Participants at today's meeting included:

Elkanah Odembo, Ambassador, Kenya
Mamadou Traore, Ambassador, Mali
James Kimonyo, Ambassador, Rwanda
Bockari Stevens, Ambassador, Sierra Leone
Ombeni Yohana Sefue, Ambassador, Tanzania
Tesfaye Yilma, Charge d'Affaires, Ethiopia

Edith Hazel, Deputy Chief of Mission, Ghana
Edwin Sele, Deputy Chief of Mission, Liberia
Rhino Mchenga, Counselor, Malawi
Issa Bouraleh, Counselor, Djibouti
Lorempo Tchabré Landjergue, Minister Counselor, Togo

###