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Resumption of U.S. Food Assistance to the North Korean People

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have reached an understanding on the parameters of a program for the resumption of U.S. food assistance for the North Korean people. International organizations and experts have expressed concern about a severe food shortage in North Korea, and the DPRK has explained to the United States that it faces a major shortfall in food supplies. In response, the United States has pledged significant assistance. The two sides have agreed on terms for a substantial improvement in monitoring and access in order to allow for confirmation of receipt by the intended recipients.

The United States intends to provide the DPRK with 500,000 metric tons in food commodities over the course of a 12-month program beginning in June 2008, with the World Food Program (WFP) to distribute approximately 400,000 tons and U.S. NGOs approximately 100,000 tons. The United States and the DPRK have agreed on a framework to allow WFP and NGO staff broad geographic access to populations in need and the ability to effectively monitor the distribution of U.S. commodities. The food aid will come from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. The exact commodity mix and delivery schedules will be based on the outcome of a joint needs assessment to be conducted in coming weeks.

An experts' meeting will be convened in Pyongyang in the near future to work out operational matters and commence detailed implementation of the program. Premised on a successful outcome of those discussions, the United States will deliver a first shipment in June, in light of the urgency of North Korea's food shortfall. This program has developed through close coordination and extensive consultation with experts in the South Korean government.

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