September 2004

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Evening.

I am very sorry that I am unable to join you on this important day in honor of World Food Day, especially since my dear friend Elie Wiesel is presenting the awards tonight. However, I am very pleased and honored to accept Action Against Hunger’s Humanitarian award alongside Dr. Yvonne Grellioty and Mr. Martin Franklin.

Hunger is an aberration of the civilized world. It is the result of civil wars, oppressive governments, and famines of biblical proportions. Families are torn asunder by the question of who will eat.

As global citizens, we must free children from the nightmare of poverty and abuse and deprivation. We must protect parents from the horrifying dilemma of choosing who will live. Hunger is a basic need that must be met before anyone can escape the depths of ignorance, before any society can stand without aid, but more importantly, before any child’s body can survive the onslaught of disease such as the scourges of HIV, TB and malaria.

Action Against Hunger is in war-torn countries that many fear to tread. They are technical people such as nurses, doctors, engineers, and teachers who forgo the comforts of modern life to assist local populations and refugees at the most fundamental level in the most dangerous locales. They provide nutrition, healthcare, sanitation, and food sustainability. They train populations to be self-sufficient. Although these dedicated men and women want to eliminate the need for their services, humanity is not willing and forces them to witness the most heinous actions.

But you and I can make a difference by supporting these amazing volunteers and ensuring that rural children have a chance at life in their villages with education and healthcare and that mothers and fathers are protected from hunger and disease.

It gives me no greater pleasure to know that all of us can make a difference no matter where we are or who we are.

I thank you.

N R Mandela