

2020 annual session of the Executive Board

Virtual session

**Her Excellency R. E. Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation,
United Arab Emirates**

Her Excellency R. E. Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, United Arab Emirates: Thank you very much. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Mr President, Executive Director, distinguished guests, thank you very much, for the invitation to address WFP's annual Executive Board session. I am deeply honoured.

Today, as our world faces one of its greatest tests, I am reminded of the fragility of humankind, but also of the importance of our common humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global health and humanitarian crisis unlike any we have seen before, a crisis that, for the first time, threatens every nation, every community and every family, particularly in parts of the world struggling with the devastating costs of conflict and natural disaster, we are seeing unprecedented proportion of potential human suffering. Now, without adequate and immediate action, we may witness the global hunger pandemic that David Beasley warned us of during his United Nations Security Council briefing in April. We may witness a quarter of a billion people pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of the year.

Our humanitarian and development models and mechanisms are being tested in ways we did not anticipate and this pandemic has underscored the need for a global response, enhanced cooperation among actors and a coordinated worldwide effort. We must do our part too, pick up our pace and challenge ourselves to work together even more closely and more effectively so that we may progress and bring opportunities that leave no one behind. It is in this spirit that the UAE has stepped up to respond swiftly and decisively to this global challenge. The UAE has supported over 70 countries by airlifting more medical aid, personal protective equipment and other supplies to countries and organizations around the world.

At the beginning of May, we launched, in partnership with WFP, an international air bridge operation, to provide a lifeline of essential health and humanitarian supplies to nations around the world, leveraging the UAE's strategic location. We must support WFP's deserved role as the logistics backbone of the global humanitarian community. One example of this partnership is what David (Beasley) already alluded to in the transportation of field hospitals in Ghana and in Ethiopia. This initiative builds on a long history of strong and valuable partnership with WFP. Our mutual interest in the areas of their work, saving and changing lives, as well as its leading logistics role, paves the way to a natural collaboration in the area of humanitarian assistance. WFP also play a critical role in overall development projects, which the UAE is very keen on supporting. Only through the nexus of both the humanitarian and the development approach will we be able to alleviate human suffering now and in the long-term. For years the UAE's international humanitarian city in Dubai has housed the largest WFP-led United Nations humanitarian response depot. This is a clear reflection of this important partnership and an example of how the UAE has placed its strategic geographic advantage as a logistics gateway to the region at the disposal of all humanitarian partners. With these partners, and with these partnerships and platforms in mind, to date we have reached 1 million healthcare workers all around the world and it is our intent to continue to reach out to communities all over, whether through the distribution of PPE, or food, or vaccines, because we are a responsible global player and we will continue to do our part.

Ladies and gentlemen, our presence here speaks to a shared spirit of collective responsibility. The fight is not over and, in many places, it has not even yet begun. This global pandemic demands continued collaboration among all of us to collectively ensure a response that supports the most vulnerable, strengthens their economies, their health systems, their food systems and more. It provides a much-needed opportunity and fierce incentive to re-shape the 21st century economy and build a future that is more resistant and more resilient to shocks, whether those are socioeconomic, consequence of climate change or born of a threat we have yet to identify.



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On behalf of the United Arab Emirates and the leadership of this nation, let me thank you once again for this very kind invitation and for the opportunity to lend our voice and lend our action to the urgencies of our time.

