

# Annual Session of the Executive Board, 2017

## Closing Remarks by the Executive Director

It has been a great week. I can say honestly this has been a very significant time in my life and I say that for a very important reason because there seems to be so much darkness in the world today. There is so much controversy, so much death, so much hunger but all the darkness in the world cannot put out the light of one single match. In this room I see flickers of light that come together.

We might have differences a little bit here or there but the unity that this world needs I think the heart, the spirit that comes out of the team that is working together here from nations all over the world, I think this exemplifies what the United Nations was created for, that we could come together for common causes to help address the needs of the world be it conflict or emergencies or sustainable opportunities for redesigning the developing nations.

And so to be here this week, it has been a long week in some ways starting in the morning and ending at night but it has been a very productive week. I think the thing that touched me the most though was when I saw the reports from the field visit. We all give our reports and you do it from the heart to a certain degree but you can tell when a heart has really been touched. When the field visits were spoken from each one, I mean Martha starting with you from all the way around to Marc Mankoussou you could see from the heart. I mean Marc Mankoussou's heart just lit up. His eyes. It was exciting to see on the field what so many people are doing together in difficult situations. Sometimes, when you do not have resources, sometimes a smiling face and a hug is the most powerful weapon for mankind. So I think that was a telling story of why we should do more of that.

This is why we will encourage more of the team around this table and more of the support networks in the parliaments, the policymakers and nations around the world to inspire them, to encourage them, to continue to be there. We want to follow up with you, number one those from the donor nations that are doing very well, we want to make sure that stays strong regardless of what nation that may be and how can we increase those numbers by supporting you to come in and sell the story and also getting them to the field. So we want to come visit you as well as open up the doors for the donor nations to come here and also go to the field.

And for those of you who do not have the assets, the resources to be able to give, there are other things you can give; your heart, your energy to help us redevelop and redesign nations in such a way that hunger is at zero at 2030. And of course, as I have alluded to a couple of times here, there are a few countries here that can do more and so I want to go with you to visit your leadership and let us sell the story. Let us sing the song together and inspire and encourage those countries that can do but have not done for whatever reason. As I always say, let us not worry about the past. Let us just look to the future and see what we can do together.

I think the top management here has heard very clearly the continued commitment and I think the zeal that is necessary for accountability and transparency and risk

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management and things that you have been bringing up that we have just as much concern as you. I think by the next Board meeting in November, I think as we will be working with you all along the way and particularly the EBB on a weekly basis.

We want to make sure that we address these concerns and put in structure what is necessary to systematically provide the accountability so that there is never a question from countries about well, "I am concerned about giving more funds to the World Food Programme because I am not certain about their transparency and accountability." We never want that to be an issue and so we want to make certain if there is any question, any concern that it is addressed and it is addressed with open hearts and transparency because we want your trust 100 percent. If there is ever anyone on this team you feel like is not being transparent or trustworthy, please let us know.

It is going to be interesting these next few years to see what happens but I am less concerned about the next few years as I am about the next few months. There is a lot of tragedy out there. There are a lot of problems out there. A lot of you are stepping up. To reiterate; I think it has been interesting – the Secretary-General, we are all humanitarians. We are also friends and neighbours to those who need help. These are our brothers, our sisters. These are our friends. To abide by that tremendous call in life is to love our neighbour. How can we make this a better world?

And so if we do not have the funds, children die, people suffer. But if we do not have the funds then we have every obligation to try to resolve the conflict. So how can we network with our friendships and relationships to get some of those parties engaged in conflict to sit at the table and pray and hope that tensions will go down?

Whether we are talking about Yemen or the Syrian Arab Republic or South Sudan or Nigeria or Somalia or wherever it may be ... as I said the other day and as you know, 13 of our most significant-funded countries, ten of those are man-made conflict. Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 is not a realistic goal with man-made conflict. But if we can resolve these man-made conflicts, with the World Food Programme taking the lead from you and with the guidance that you will provide I have zero doubt that we can achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.

The experience and the expertise of the staff that we have out there in the field and in Headquarters ... and the Headquarters we are here not to get in the way of those out in the field but we are here to energize them, to inspire them, encourage them, get out of their way and empower them, provide them with the resources they need.

I know as you have seen as you have travelled out there in the field, it is an amazing team regardless of their ethnic background, regardless of their nationality, regardless of their religion, regardless, there is a unified spirit, a heart that comes together for helping those who need help, those vulnerable populations and people out there in the most conflicted divisive areas in the world to the areas that might be suffering from drought or whatever the case may be.

I want to give a special thanks to two groups that will be on the stage I think doing a more formal presentation. The members of the Executive Board or the

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Permanent Representatives, etc., that will be leaving us, I want to thank you. I obviously have not got to know you that well and so you will be free at last, thank God you are free at last, as Martin Luther King said. Everyone else might be stuck with me for a while so but I am hoping you can look back and say I wish I had been there for the exciting things that are happening. So thank you for your service. I really mean that.

And we will also be paying tribute to some tremendous friends that have been in the vineyards out in the field, in the Headquarters from staff that will be departing from us... such as like James Harvey over here. I mean Mr. Harvey's life has been in helping people around the world so he will be one of many but he has been tremendous. Just a few months I have got to know him Mr Harvey it has been an honour. Thank you.

Mr Vice-President, your Excellencies, thank you for this amazing opportunity that you have allowed me to be the Executive Director. As I say to my team when we have our meetings, I am not the leader. I am the cheerleader. We have a great team and we look forward to achieving great things together. I am sure we are going to be crying together and weeping together but we will be laughing together and working hard together as we work together not alone, not in our silo but as partners with the other agencies like FAO and Graziano da Silva and Gilbert Houngbo from IFAD and other United Nations agencies.

Our objective is not to promote WFP. Our objective is to promote ending of world hunger. That is our goal. I cannot think of a better group in the world than WFP to do that so I am looking forward to the next Board meeting and thank goodness it is not next week. I think we are all looking for a good night's sleep tonight.

Mr Vice-President, thank you. You have done an amazing job, as we say herding the cats, keeping everyone together and achieving I think the right spirit in this room which is so needed in a time like this. And a special thanks to Harriet Spanos. She has just been great.