

## First regular session of the Executive Board, 2018

### Opening statement by Mr Zoltán Kálmán, President of the Executive Board

Distinguished colleagues, distinguished members of the Board, I feel really very much honoured to be elected as President of this Executive Board. I wish to start by expressing my appreciation for the excellent work of the outgoing President, Mr Yousef Juhail, Permanent Representative of Kuwait. Under his leadership the Board has achieved significant progress in so many issues. Similarly, I wish to thank my fellow Bureau members for their commitment. It was a real pleasure working together in a friendly atmosphere with Mr Haruna-Rashid Kromah, Deputy Permanent Representative of Liberia for List A, Ms Angélica Jácome, Permanent Representative of Panama for List C and last but not least, His Excellency Hans Hoogeveen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands for List D.

Dear Board members, I wish to let you know that I had my first personal contact and my *primo amore* with WFP more than 30 years ago when I attended a session of the CFA, the Committee on Food Aid, Policies and Programmes. That was the predecessor of the Executive Board. We had a discussion in the WFP premises in Via Cristoforo Colombo in the presence of the Executive Director of that time, Mr James Ingram. From that time on as you are well aware, WFP has gone through very significant changes including the creation of the Executive Board and then the most important and most positive change was undoubtedly the shift from food aid delivery to providing food assistance. Then more recently, after long and inclusive discussions, the adoption of the Integrated Road Map and the WFP Strategic Plan, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda, paved the way for a more modern organization which is able to respond to emerging needs in a most efficient way. With the IRM implementation and many related issues, a lot still remains to be done, however.

Dear colleagues, being President of this Board makes me also happy and pleased for several reasons. We have been working together with many of you in the past few years and I know how much all of you are dedicated and committed to reach our common goals. I am confident that our joint dedication and commitment will be a solid basis for our work in the coming months. I think it is also vital that the Executive Director and management listen to and really need the guidance of the Board. The opportunities to regularly interact with the management through informal consultations or the

possibilities to have bilateral discussions with directors or staff are just some eminent examples of this Board-management relationship based on mutual respect. In this constructive and collaborative spirit and with the assistance of the Board Secretary, Ms Harriet Spanos, and her team, it is indeed a great pleasure to be the President.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to add that I consider this important role as a service. I am ready to serve you, Board members, in having your discussions structured and targeted and whenever you need, I assure that I will always stand ready and available to listen to you and consult with you for improving our joint work. Only an efficient Board can provide proper directions and guidance for WFP to accomplish its complex and indispensable mandate to serve the people in need.

Distinguished Board members, let me conclude by saying a few words about my priorities for the coming year. The biennial programme of work of the Executive Board determines the main issues we are expected to focus on. We have a rather light session this time but as you know, our agenda is already full, both for the annual session and for the second regular session. Although I consider all the issues on our agenda as highly relevant, I wish to highlight my own priorities: firstly, the push for complementarities and synergies, a real and strengthened RBA collaboration means increased efficiency. Similarly, in a wider context, an active engagement in the United Nations reform process is essential, particularly in the field. Secondly, we need commitment and hard work to change people's lives through local solutions. As Josette Sheeran, former Executive Director, said, we need to empower local communities to cope with challenges and to be able to help themselves. This entails gender equity, local food purchases, access to improved nutrition and production assets, innovations and many other issues.

Lastly but not less importantly, I consider indispensable the question of oversight, security and safety aspects of WFP's work, including zero tolerance to harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power, to protect those who need to be protected.

Members of the Executive Board, I wish to thank you very much once again for your kind support and confidence and look forward to working together with all of you. Thank you very much.