



UNOPS



**2018 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP**

Opening Remarks of Mr. Zoltán Kálmán, Minister Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome and President of the Executive Board of WFP

on

Background Paper – Topic 3: Overcoming inequalities among and within countries, including gender inequality, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – reaching the poorest and most vulnerable populations first

**Friday, 1 June 2018
15:00 to 17:00**

Presidents of the Executive Boards, Executive Directors, Guest Speakers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and a great honour for me to chair this afternoon session and to make some opening remarks on this important topic of overcoming inequalities and discrimination, including gender inequalities.

The World Economic Forum in Davos has had this issue on its agenda for some years and participants agreed that inequalities mean not only serious social and human rights problems, but they also mean financial risks for national economies, being obstacles to economic growth and development. There has been consensus among world leaders that urgent actions are required in this regard.

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) adopted a Statement of Commitment in December 2015, obliging CEB member organizations to put combatting inequalities and discrimination and the pledge to ‘leave no one behind’ at the centre of their strategic frameworks and plans of action.

Unfortunately, in spite of these nice objectives and decisions, inequalities both among and within countries have continued to increase. Something went wrong. More wealth has concentrated in fewer hands in the past years. As the background paper says, “*Offshore tax havens are facilitating money laundering and tax evasion, causing increased inequality.*”

As a consequence of all the above, the number and the proportion of marginalized people has dramatically increased. After many years of moderate improvement in the world hunger situation, last year the number of hungry and malnourished people has risen globally, reaching the level of 815 million. This is outrageous and unacceptable and require global solutions.

We are here today also to identify new, more efficient ways and means to combat inequalities and all forms of discrimination. We need to find the solutions and take concrete measures to implement them. I wish to quote a message here from Pope Francis, “*The poor and hungry do not need charity, they need dignity, and dignity means decent employment and wages for all*”. His Holiness said this in Rome in 2014 and I think his guidance should be listened and followed. This also confirms the strong interlinkages among various SDGs.

Let me mention my recent experience in Uganda. I, like some of you in this room, had the privilege to participate in the Joint Field Visit of UN Executive Boards one month ago. (I take this opportunity to congratulate UNFPA for the excellent preparation.) As we could learn, Uganda welcomes a high number of refugees and provides them not only with food, health care and shelter (in collaboration with the UN

organizations there), but they give all refugees plots of land as well, where people can build their houses and produce at least part of their own food. In fact, some of the refugees we could interact with told us that they are grateful for the food and other assistance, but most importantly they are happy for having re-gained their dignity.

Finally, I wish to refer to a WFP initiative to demonstrate the True Cost of a Plate of Food. This contains an important message on the root causes of hunger. Contrary to the misbeliefs hunger has nothing to do with food production and availability: we produce more food than necessary; the food is available. We even waste one-third of it. Hunger is the consequence of poverty and extreme, unjustified inequality. As the WFP study shows, in low-income countries, buying a single meal can absorb a significant portion of a person's income.

WFP has another important and well-known initiative. School feeding provides nutrition to children, helping their education through better school attendance. In some cases, it is coupled with involving children in activities in school orchards, teaching them to better value food. Furthermore, many times food used for school feeding is purchased from smallholders, contributing to boosting local economies. With all these initiatives, WFP is turning its slogan into a reality: *“Moving from saving people's lives to changing their lives”*.

I firmly believe that unjustified inequalities and all forms of discrimination, including gender inequality, can be eliminated and should be combatted jointly. I am looking forward to listening to your contributions this afternoon and I wish you a fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your kind attention.