

## Second regular session of the Executive Board, 2017

### Opening remarks by the Executive Director

**D. Beasley, Executive Director:** Thank you very much. It is an honour and pleasure to be here in this official capacity for the second time. If you recall, my first time was just literally days after I had received this honourable position on 5 April. That was a little over seven months ago, of which out of those seven months I have been in Rome maybe 50 days. Ms. Mohammed and I were just sharing notes a little while ago; I think we passed each other on the plane in the air every day or every week. In this world, there is so much tragedy. Even this morning when we think we might be getting one tragedy or a natural disaster behind us, another one stares us in the face like in Iran where over 300 people have been reported as having died because of an earthquake. And so it never ends. Someone in the staff meeting last week was talking about when Jim Morris, who was the Executive Director years ago, and they were all very concerned about what happened if you had two L3s at the same time. And now we have seven L3s at the same time, in a world that is conflicted more than at any time period since the creation of the United Nations.

I had planned on spending four to five hours yesterday afternoon to literally work on my talk this morning and only to get back to have an emergency meeting on conference calls all evening on Yemen and the surrounding area, of the compounding problems there. And so please excuse me if I am not as fluid as I normally would be. I want to say this: I returned from New York, meeting with the Secretary-General as well as meeting Ms. Mohammed and many of the other leaders, and we had a tremendous week discussing United Nations reform.

Who would have ever thought we would be dealing with so much misery today? In fact, it was 1962 when the World Food Programme had its start and it was because of an earthquake in Iran so here we are now, 55 years later. History repeats itself in some ways but yet the way WFP started in emergency conditions, only now it is a whole different ball game because 80 percent of our funding now is in man-made conflict zones. Nineteen countries in protracted conflict. And this is devastating. When I took on this responsibility, as I said in April, who would take on this role with the United States talking about zeroing out its funding, the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, who would want that job? But that is why we are here. And we are going to have a busy week, a very productive week where there are country strategic plans or interim plans, the integrated road map, the different issues that we will be talking about, new personnel, transparency, accountability, all in the documents that we will be taking up over the next four days which hopefully will allow the World Food Programme to position itself to achieve its objectives. It has transformed over the many decades, because we must be ready to reform and adjust accordingly because the conflicts are different. The problems are different.

It is no longer just coming in for a few months and dealing with an issue and leaving. It is now being on the ground in countries like Syria or Yemen or Somalia, for years upon years upon years. And so now how do we take humanitarian dollars and convert them into development opportunities? How can we do more with less? How do we become more efficient? I think the World Food Programme is well positioned, as the United Nations talks about reform, we are the model of how to think outside the box, how to really address the nexus between the humanitarian side and the development side. We will be able to showcase examples where we have those successes which can be models for the industry of the United Nations worldwide.

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My first objective when I took this role was to do everything that I possibly could to take advantage of all my historical relationships in the United States to make certain that we did not lose (US) \$2 billion. I think we all can see with confidence today in spite of all of the fake news or whatever the news is out there nowadays that the United States has stepped up from the White House to the people's house in the United States House and the United States Senate. Not only has the United States not gone backward, the United States has stepped up more. This year we may be looking at anywhere from between (US) \$2 and 2.5 billion. I say that because it is now a challenge to each and every one of you in this room, who only months ago were expressing grave concern about the United States. The American people are speaking and speaking very clearly that they will not back down on their commitment to world peace and the humanitarian and development sector. As I have said to you and many of my friends in Washington that if you want to spend another half a trillion dollars on military, then cut the World Food Programme, because we are the first line of offence and defence against extremism. Because we are in the game. We are making a difference with every child, whether it is in a war-stricken zone, a drought-stricken area, because of climate change now being compounded and taken advantage of by extremists ... which will get us into the Sahel region which we need to discuss. It is a different day.

So to see the United States stepping up, but now other countries. My question to you is: What can we do together to strategically align the traditional donors to be able to give more? And why give more? Because the question I have to ask is, do we believe in truly achieving zero hunger? I challenge each and every one of you sitting in this room if you truly are committed to that goal, then we must have measurables, benchmarks and an action plan to achieve it. And it is going to take more money.

So, in the last 7 months I have travelled to over 25 nations, over 200 meetings in capitals, I think several hundred meetings with permanent representatives here in the city, 160 some-odd meetings out in the field. The next 12 months, to achieve objective 2, which will be how do we get the traditional donors to step up even more? Because we are funded at (US) \$6 billion. This year we are looking at the possibility of (US) \$6.8 billion – of which some of that money will be spent in 2018/2019 -- unprecedented resources, but it is not nearly enough when you look at the needs of 109 million people on the brink of starvation. We are able to reach 80 million and out of that 80 million – that is not full rations – full for maybe half and half for maybe half. So, we are barely keeping people alive. We are averting famine today, but while we have averted famine, the number of hungry people has gone up, up, up. Which is why we must give attention to, first and foremost, resolving man-made conflict. We must end these wars. All of us in this room must take advantage of any and all relationships that we have to address some of these conflicts from a regional perspective.

As we discussed last week in New York, we can have the best structure possible but if we have the wrong people it will not work. Or you could have the worst structure with the right people and it can work. But why not have the best structure with the right people and the funding necessary so that we can achieve the objectives? We will work through some of the different and variety of issues as the United Nations transforms itself over the years to come to meet the challenges.

I have hope in spite of all these conflicts. Why? Because I think there is a millennial population out there that is fed up with this conflict and division around the world. We will be approaching the traditional donors for more money ... sitting around this room as I look at the United Kingdom and Germany who have been stepping up more and more ... and many

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of you cannot give money but you can give expertise and help in partnering with us in your region and you can help in conflicts in your region.

But while we want to seek more money, I would say at least (US) \$1 billion more, maybe \$2 billion from the traditional donors. I want to align every country that traditionally has given money to their interests, for example, like Canada. Canada has a keen interest in schools, education and gender parity. Now I cannot think of a more powerful programme in any country of the world that would address parity than a school feeding programme. Because we know what happens when a young girl ends up in a school feeding programme. They delay marriage and their income rates go up and the other list of consequential positive benefits is unending. So, I would like to go to Ottawa and make the case to the leadership there – do you believe these sustainable goals? If so we need more funding for school feeding to address education and gender parity. That is just an example of how we need to think so which countries would be best aligned. The Russian Federation. I have been meeting with leadership in Russia to discuss where can we realign Russia's interests. China. As we go through each country here, how can we align the interests, geopolitically such that countries will give more. How do we get to that extra (US) \$2 billion?

The World Food Programme has done an effective job of raising funds but we have got to take it to the next level, building upon the past but reshaping the thinking of what we must do. So therefore in the next year, I plan to be in more capitals, meeting with the policymakers. We have got to make the case to the policymakers that appropriate the funds to show them why it is in their interest, national security interest and for the goodness of humanity to invest in the World Food Programme and what it means to the future. Because we know what happens in certain regions of the world when we ignore them. You are going to pay for it one way or the other. Why not pay for it on the front end and get it right?

Other opportunities for fundraising in non-traditional sources such as the private sector and then the digital world with the millennials. You have heard me mention this already. We plan to strategically align in that sphere. We do believe that the World Food Programme is well-positioned. Well, everybody wants more money from the millennials, taking advantage of the social media. But we are not just anybody, we are the United Nations World Food Programme. When we stand, we stand tall, we stand with a vision and we stand with compassion and we stand with the hope of achieving objectives and I do not think there is anyone who will turn us down when they see what we want to do because we are the United Nations World Food Programme. And our goal and objective is to end world hunger. How would you like to be part of that dream? So, we wish to take advantage of the expertise in the social media networks, the Facebooks and the Googles and the list goes on, the Amazons to addressing them to help them align with us so that we can achieve objectives. Imagine if you have a billion millennials giving just a dollar each or two dollars and they can see the child, whether it is in South Sudan or the Lake Chad basin, knowing that if they help that child, that child's father may not fall prey to extremists trying to recruit using food as a weapon of war while we are trying to use food as a weapon of peace. We are using food as a weapon to bring people together, not to create division like you see in the DRC.

As I met with President Kabila just a few weeks ago, pleading with him. Whether your term ends in 6 months, 12 months or 18 months, your legacy should be defined in the next 12 months by bringing peace to your region, bringing the tribes together and use the World Food Programme as a way to bring tribes together, using food for children and communities and tribes in a positive way. You know what happens when we go into these

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countries with all the conflict, this group says the World Food Programme is helping that group more, that group says we are helping that group more. And we are not. We are neutral because we want to use peace, use food as a way to bring people together. So, the digital world creates tremendous opportunities. Yes in raising money but also in helping us achieve objective 3. Objective 1 is to make sure we turn the United States around now. objective 2 is get other nations around the world to step up more; number 3 is the reform that is needed. One of the great things about coming here to the World Food Programme was I realized very quickly that we have an amazing team. Does that mean we are perfect? No, there is always room for improvement. And so while the United Nations is reforming, how do we reform? What do we need to do better? Technology is going to be one of those areas. We have just been rated one of the top entities in the world on innovation. Whether you are talking about blockchain technology that we are using -- and as we enter into a whole new sphere of transformation and commodities and cash-based transfers, we are now using (US) \$1 billion in cash-based transfer. How do we use blockchain technology to save costs? I think what we are looking at now are 3 percent cost savings just by using blockchain technology. Three percent savings is a lot of money. Just like we are talking about reducing the ISC rate from 7 percent to 6.5 percent. Well that means 0.5 percent more money to beneficiaries.

The success stories that we are already seeing in the Sahara are just tremendous and I could go on and on and on with a list of so many success stories in the innovative world. Our innovation accelerator centre in Munich, we have 30 cutting-edge projects in 20 countries right now; 700 World Food Programme staff have actively participated. I say that because this is what is really I think so cool about our team. They know for every place we save a dollar, two rations. Two rations in war zones, three rations in non-conflict zones. That is the mindset. And so, whether you are talking about animal fodder that has improved the livestock milk in the Sahara Desert because of the hydroponics, which is a 200 percent increase or the blockchain technology that we are using in the Syrian refugee camps, the list goes on. But most substantively, as we discuss which modality is the best in this country or that country, and we ask you to let the World Food Programme work together to determine which modality is the best and most effective in each country. Many of you have signed on to the concept of the Grand Bargain, free us up from the regulations and we want oversight, we want transparency, we want accountability but do not burden us with too much red tape and regulations. As you and I have discussed. you have asked us, in the United Nations you have asked us, in the Rome-based agencies to work together, well we are. I am now asking you and the donors and the countries, for yourself to work more effectively together because now I think as we look at the regional dynamics, it is a different world. I have heard from many donors, from prime ministers to presidents to parliament leaders who will point to a country and say, "We have put hundreds of millions of dollars in this country and we have little to show for it." So, we have got to rethink and as Ms. Mohammed and I were talking earlier and last week, I said the World Food Programme, we are always out of the box, we are always thinking about being more creative. You have heard me talk about, for example, the Tigray area in Ethiopia or the Somalia region. These are just classic examples of what we have done right and what we have not done so well. (US) \$170 million spent in the Tigray area over a 10-year period that resulted in what? Not just saving lives but now producing livelihoods in an area that had a lunar landscape, now if you look at satellite imagery, crops, livestock, production, success and you are no longer funding the World Food Programme as before. That is the type of success that will give us zero hunger by 2030. On the other hand, we have spent (US) \$1.2 billion in the Somali region of Ethiopia over the last 10 years and tell

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me what do we have to show for it? People have been kept alive. There is not enough money for us to achieve zero hunger just keeping people alive without sustainable development.

You and I have already begun this discussion of the importance of taking the humanitarian dollar in these protracted areas of drought or conflict and utilizing it in such a way that every dollar that we receive...I have challenged my team to think of it with the best practices that we have around the world and come up with development opportunities and solutions.

For example, last year, 2016, 10 million people in 52 countries were in food-for-asset programmes building bridges, building roads and schools and the list goes on and on. I have not yet met, whether it is a refugee or an internally displaced person or someone in a poverty-stricken area, that did not want to improve their livelihood for their family and their future. They are looking for us to give them ideas and hope. As I told Mr. Graziano da Silva in the Somali region, where we feed 3.3 million people, 2 million or more of them were able-bodied adults that want to change their landscape like Tigray. So we need to rethink the humanitarian approach there and understand where the humanitarian nexus is with the development taking advantage of the human capital that wants to improve their livelihoods and conditions, so that they do not fall prey to extremism like Al Shabaab and Boko Haram and ISIS and Al Qaeda which are moving more deeply and infiltrating the Sahel region. Ms. Mohammed is chairing this group of the Sahel working group. We have got to now look at a more regional concept, not just a nation. What can we do together more effectively in Somalia, in north-east Nigeria, in Chad, in Mali and the list goes on? How do we do it more effectively? Because if we do not, as I speak to the European nations, there is absolute aggressive infiltration taking advantage of the drought and the destabilized area to continue the destabilization in such a way that there will be migration and with that migration -- as I have said and was reported I think in the Washington Post by the Associated Press this weekend -- it will make what we see in Europe today in terms of terrorist activity look like a picnic.

So, we need to get ahead of the curve. We need to think long term. The Sahel region is an area where we must think more strategically. In the past year, we worked with 1.5 million smallholder farmers to access commercial markets. Just last year we procured 2 million tons of food from 74 developing countries worth (US) \$1 billion. You understand the dynamics of that when we are buying and producing and supporting markets in developing countries. It is not just providing food for keeping people alive, it is also developing livelihood sustainability. We have helped farmers supply schools offering meals in 45 countries while we ourselves in the World Food Programme feed 16 million schoolchildren directly. We are working with nations around the world for school feeding programmes that impact over 45 million children. And so we are hopeful that we can make the challenge, like on McGovern/Dole, we plan to make the challenge in the United States to double up, triple up but not just the United States. Every one of you in this room, I want to hear from you how can you take advantage of our voice to come in to your nation's capital and make the case to your policymakers to step up more money in general so we can address the Sustainable Development Goals that we all aspire to by 2030? But if we do not put our money where the mouth is, it is just talk. And so the World Food Programme, we are hoping that this United Nations reform that takes place is going to give us greater credibility to achieve greater objectives. But at the same time, as you know, at the World Food Programme we do not wait on anyone. We will keep moving and we are going to keep providing models of opportunity that I think that the United Nations can replicate.

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It has been so exciting to see our top team in New York, out in the field, aspiring to make changes that will impact the world and so we are looking forward to working together. I know I probably need to end now. But now and again as we talked about transformation and we could talk about that or what we are doing out in the field in a lot of different places all day long because that is where I get extremely excited. Because I want plans of action in every country, working with the country strategic plans and what we are going to do, and understanding where we are going in the future, how do we get there, what are the measurables? And I want to say that because just in the last few countries that I have been into ... for example the DRC or the Central African Republic, when I met with the staff, I said what is your gender parity? In the field, it was 80/20. How do you get to 80/20 unless you are totally not concerned about gender parity? So, we will set objectives and benchmarks for each country, being realistic to the landscape. But every country I go to, I have a private meeting with our leadership so the Executive Director down to the regional director down to the country director. I want goals, I want objectives and I want measurables and I want to see an action plan. I am going to check every few months, where are you, how is it going, what do you need? Otherwise gender parity is just another United Nations aspiration or exasperation of not getting it done. In the United Nations, we are still talking about this? How long has the United Nations been talking about gender parity. At least a few years. Decades.

In the World Food Programme, we are going to talk about Mr. Lopes da Silva later, not now. We are going to have fun with Mr. Lopes da Silva later. When we were interviewing for this post, when I came in, not getting into a specific number, there was out of the Assistant Executive Directors, there were 20 percent female -- that would be one out of five. Well we will now have four, we will have two out of four, 50 percent so we have gone from 20 percent to 50 percent in just a few months. And now you all get to meet her later. She was our regional director. As we went through the process and narrowed down all the candidates from around the world, we had some amazing candidates from all over: from the United Kingdom to the United States, the list goes on, from Jordan and Germany and I said, my gosh, we need them all. So I sat down with three of them and said I need three of you right now. I said, "What is more important, a title or a cause?" Because we are facing so much calamity, so many L3s, we cannot handle anymore without building up the team. We have to be prepared from the top all the way to the bottom. I have got to have more experienced, world class men and women at the top because we cannot be spread thin anymore without having the best of the best. So these three will be your team, working together not worried about ego. There can only be one AED but there will be a team. I might have the title Executive Director, but I am a servant, as I have said I am the cheerleader, not the leader. Yes, I have to make final decisions with regard to many things, but when we are sitting at that table we are all equal. I push, and our leadership group can tell you I like to challenge. I will say things that I do not necessarily believe in, but I want to push them and push them and see how they fight back. Because they will come up with an idea, and I will say, "Now that is the way to think." As the World Food Programme positions itself for the future, we have got to position the teams that we need to achieve the objectives, not for just in crisis mode. As we truly are going to transform the system in driving that nexus of humanitarianism and development, a transformation with commodities and cash-based transfers, in very delicate and dangerous areas. We need the best of the best in school feeding programmes, in food-for-asset programmes, taking it up to the next level. We want every one of our children to be in a school feeding programme no matter where they are in the world. We want every one of the

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beneficiaries that are able-bodied to be in a food-for-asset programme. We believe that zero hunger is a noble goal and it is the opportunity and right for every child in the world to grow up being fed, not being stunted or overweight because of inadequate nutrition. So our team will be working together for food security, to end hunger, nutrition and sustainable development.

And so, Mr. President, I want to end with this last, you have heard this last little story. Some of you have heard about Paul Tergat, a Kenyan. He wrote me just a couple of weeks ago while I was out in the field. As a hungry child Paul had received WFP school meals, and he wrote that school meals not only became a huge motivation to attend school daily but “also opened a pathway to my ultimate success in life.” Paul is the new President of Kenya’s National Olympic Committee. He says, thanks to WFP, “my life changed for the better and for the good.” These are the stories that we want all over the world.

These are the stories that we can achieve if we work together. Let us fight out whatever we need to fight out in this room to make ourselves better not because of ego but because of objectives. I believe that working with the leadership in New York with Ms. Mohammed and António Guterres, amazing people, and with you in this room with the expertise in the food security sector, the World Food Programme is positioned for greater things, ending hunger, ending conflict, changing the world for a better day. So, Mr. President, that ends my remarks and I look forward to answering any questions later.