

## **Zero Hunger: Turning Commitment into Action to Achieve SDG2**

**FAO Headquarters**

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### **Statement made by Mr David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme**

I think all the special guests have been recognized a couple of times so I will just dispense with all the protocol.

My dear friends on the platform; special guests that are here; my good friends Graziano and Gilbert. We are working together, I think in a way that is unprecedented, for a couple of reasons: you demanded it and we expected it.

The problems in the world are so great. We are facing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. We do not have time for inefficiencies and duplications. And the team spirit that we have is about not who gets the credit, not about silos and protection of turf but about how do we get the job done, who is in the best position in each situation to take the lead, how do we collaborate and cooperate? Because the World Food Programme stands ready, stands prepared with our 70 aircraft, 5,000 trucks, 20 ships and thousands of people all around the world working together, to collaborate to end world hunger.

That's Sustainable Development Goal number 2: end world hunger by 2030. Unfortunately, it has zero chance of succeeding in the atmosphere that we have in the world today. Of our 13 highest expenditure countries, out of the 80 that the World Food Programme is engaged in, 10 of them are because of man-made conflicts.

With all the technological advancements in the world today, health care advancements, programmes and policies passed all over the world, governments doing their best and yet we have got more war and conflict and brokenness, and loneliness, than any time period I know in my life. We have got more fluid wealth than any time period in the history of the world. We're spending more money on military than any time period in the history of the world, but yet with just a small percentage of that we can end world hunger.

In unprecedented ways, we are having to address issues never thought of before. The World Food Programme historically has been involved in emergencies and carrying commodities. But now it's different. Different modalities depending upon each situation and each country, whether it's Syria, with in-kind or commodities, or Lebanon with an e-card. And we want to work with you, collaborate together, to make sure that we provide the most efficient, most effective programmes, policies, execution necessary for every unique country in the world.

But with our distraction today it is very difficult to address the fundamental problems. Yemen, South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, just to name six of the ten man-made conflicts. Four million people per day that we're feeding, working together with IFAD and FAO in Syria; 2.4 million per day in Somalia; 2.1 million people per day in South Sudan – and that changes by the hour.

When we have the access we can get it done, but when we do not have the access and we have conflict, we cannot achieve the objectives that we so dearly want to do. So we are asking you to continue to hold us accountable, but we are also asking you to apply the pressure necessary on the nations to end some of these conflicts.

I was talking to some of my friends earlier... we have got so many complex situations all over the world, it seems like we are running around everywhere. And I said, "Maybe we can just slow down and back-up

a little and focus just on two or three big conflicts.” That is what I am asking the ambassadors and the foreign service departments, and the leaders of the free world, to just focus and end just a few.

If you just end a few, we have the resources to achieve the objective of zero hunger. We are ready, we are prepared, we are collaborating. Gilbert and Graziano, we are taking trips together, we are bringing our teams together to see how we can work more effectively with your limited dollars.

We are in an era in which there is a lot of concern about donor fatigue, and of course the distractions of the day around the world, like in Brexit, Brexit, Brexit or Trump, Trump, Trump or Le Pen, Le Pen, Le Pen. People are not hearing balanced news today, people around the world who normally will step up generously from their own finances, do not realize the seriousness of the situation all around the world.

We would like to be engaged in working on sustainable resilience in developing countries, so that we do not have conflict, and so every child, mother and father around the world has hope because they are being fed, because they are growing their own crops and they are getting their food supply to the markets, and there is less waste, because we are working on the things that we should be working on.

So I am asking those of you in each of these countries to call upon our leaders to bring these conflicts to an end so that we can do what we want to do, so we can dream again and achieve zero hunger by 2030.

I have great expectations and hopes from the leadership in this room, regardless of which side of the planet you are on. Every child on the face of the planet is depending on us. As we speak, if we do not receive the funds that we need, just in the four countries facing famine, 600,000 children face death, 30 million people do not know where the next meal is coming in the four countries facing famine, 20 million are on the brink of starvation.

Children are going to die if we do not get our act together as leaders of this world.

There are those of you in this room that have stepped up in amazing ways. And there are those of you in this room that have not stepped up in ways that you should. You know who I am talking about. They are your neighbors and the war is in your home areas. I am asking you to do more to help your neighbors.

I think there has been some concern that the United States may cut some of the funding for humanitarian efforts, and I can tell you with great confidence that I have no doubt that the United States will not turn its back. It will stand strong, as have nations like Germany and EU and so many of you in this room like the UK...I could go on and on, thank you. But there are those of you in this room that want us to come to your nations to make the appeal to do more. Because there's more that we can do, but we must collaborate. Because our goal in life is to help others, to care for others, and do it in such a way that provides sustainability and not dependence.

I am enjoying working with my two friends, because I call them friends first. I have got Graziano's cell phone, his phone number, Gilbert's phone number. If they have a problem with me, or a problem with WFP, they call me, we call each other. This is the type of spirit that we want to have.

It is not about ego. It is about opportunity and hope, and so we are looking forward to working with you. These are two great leaders, I am learning a lot from them. I am like the new kid on the block, but I can tell you that I am excited about what we can achieve. And we can achieve zero hunger, but we need your help in ending conflict and to partner with us in a way we have never seen before. Thank you very much and God bless.