

## Opening remarks by Executive Director David Beasley on the occasion of the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board

**D. Beasley, Executive Director:** It is great to be here. It is amazing how many people will say this should be a very busy week for you. I actually say it is actually one of my greatest, easiest weeks because you are not on airplanes and helicopters and hotels. You are in one bed and one office building with all your best friends. What could be better than that?

It is a pleasure to have our special guest, Alberto Beltrame. His background is Italian, so I want to make sure I get the Beltrame right. But it is good to have you here. I am looking forward to hearing from you and your perspectives on how we can achieve Zero Hunger.

Since our last Board meeting in June, as many of you know, we have been traveling quite a bit, making a lot of rounds out in the field, building coalitions of movement in my opinion, to end world hunger. I visited the World Food Programme's largest donors, whether it is in Berlin or Brussels or DC or London, spent time deepening our friendships and our alliances in China, the Gulf States and South Africa. In September I attended the United Nations General Assembly in New York, a tremendous opportunity to build and strengthen the bonds with the national governments as well as the private sector. We discussed new ways with the Secretary-General how we can collaborate more effectively, United Nations agency heads working together at the Chief Executives Board. I have also visited operations in many countries around the world bearing witness to the reason why we are here, to the suffering of people that we serve and the huge challenges that we face every single day as we provide life-saving assistance to millions that are facing starvation because as you have seen and you have heard the severe hunger rate has risen substantially just in the past two years.

Ten days ago, I briefed the United Nations Security Council after visiting Yemen where the suffering of literally millions of people has increased substantially; an increase of 1.4 million just in the past 30 days, now to 12 million people who are literally one step away from famine. The nightmares, the heart-breaking scene is just astounding. We must be prepared. But as I have mentioned to you last week one-on-one in the List meetings, the answer to this is not going to be a single humanitarian approach. It must be a twin-track approach to end this catastrophe. Scale up to reach to 12 million people a month. As you have heard, the UAE and the Saudis, Kuwait and others, are stepping up with substantial funds to address the humanitarian needs, but we also must stabilize the Yemeni Riyal, which is down 235 percent since January 2015. But even this is just a band-aid solution. Above all, each and every one of us in this room representing the nations around the world, we must use our influence to stop the war, to rescue the Yemeni economy from total collapse and help save millions of people.

While we may have given special attention to Yemen lately, some places seem to be forgotten, for example the DRC. Just in the past year, the number of people hungry in the DRC has risen from 7.7 million to 13.1 million. The World Food Programme is reaching about 5.4 million and we need to do more. But what most people do not see or understand is that the World Food Programme is strategically in the middle and engaged with the Ebola crisis as a logistics hub for operations. We are also supporting 20,000 Ebola-affected people per month. We are providing logistic support, helicopters, supplies, transporting needs to the remote locations for staffs of WHO and others who are strategically involved.

Yes, your Excellencies, WFP, we are the best of the best in true emergencies, fighting fires, so to speak. But if we are truly serious about ending hunger, we need a coordinated, properly funded, global strategy. That means joining the dots between the humanitarian relief and the long-term development creating conditions to defeat hunger, build social cohesion, solving conflicts and eliminate migration by necessity, for example. This past year we served over 91 million people working in over 83 countries. Since our last June Board meeting, I have visited 24 countries, 32 visits. I have had some of you say I get tired just looking at your schedule.



Quite frankly, if I look at the schedule, it will wear you out, but where have we been going? Out in the field, seeing operations, watching our humanitarian friends put their lives on the line every day serving people. And then bringing attention to what is going on in Yemen, what is happening in Syria, what is happening in Lebanon and Jordan and Chad and Niger and Rohingya and Bangladesh, giving support on the field, on the ground, boots on the ground, so to speak. And then coming back and letting the world know through the media, and then before the Security Council. Then before the donors speaking with the ministers of government, and (also) with the parliament members, whom we have been taking to the field, so that when the foreign ministry asks for more monies and more flexibility, the members of the parliament will respond positively because their hearts have been touched with the suffering out in the communities but also the effectiveness of the programmes.

In 2018 we set another record year for contributions, (US) \$7.35 billion. That is up from \$5.87 billion in 2016. That is an extra (US) \$4 million per day. And at \$4 million per day at 25 cents a meal for a child in a poor country, that is 16 million meals more for children per day that we are able to help. That is because of the hard work of all of you on this Board, (along with) our teams out in the fields, sensitizing the people around the world -- you have heard me say that sometimes the media has been very distracted in the last couple of years with this or with that, whether it is Trump, Trump, Trump, or Brexit, Brexit, Brexit, or LePen, LePen, LePen - and we have got to sensitize the world to the children who are suffering. We have been able to penetrate that veil and make the difference, but we have got more to do because 2019 is going to be another year that we are going to be facing, in my opinion, record humanitarian needs and, as you know, largely fuelled by manmade conflict.

To reach all of those needs, we would need (US) \$9.8 billion. So far, we estimate we are on track to raise about \$6.8 billion. That leaves a 31 percent funding gap. Fifty percent of this amount is just for operations in Yemen, Syria+5 and South Sudan. This is why we also must strategically engage in the private sector in multiple ways, yes in the fundraising sector. We must develop a strategic plan to be robust and help fill in this gap. Many of the nations in this room have stepped up and that we are very grateful for. We will continue to respond with you, to go to your capitals, to continue to bring attention, and we need your help in doing that. But we also must make the case for funding in the nations like DRC and the greater Sahel Region because these countries, these regions are crying out for comprehensive peacebuilding initiatives to really tackle the root causes of hunger and instability. It is a bleak picture, but the good news is we have long-term strategic interventions that will work if we take the right decisions, invest in the right programmes and use our resources as efficiently and as effectively as possible. I emphasize effectively. As I have said before, what good is being efficient if you are not being effective?

As an example with regards to efficiencies and effectiveness -- using our purchasing power to support smallholder farmers. Supporting smallholder farmers is critical. That is why we enjoy partnering with FAO. Two of our friends are sitting back at the back, I think. Manny and Mario, thank you all for being here. We appreciate you being here. And tell my good friend, your boss, hello for me. We will see him later, I am sure. But in the smallholder farmers, as we recognize in the Rome-based agencies, this partnership of impacting smallholder farmers because we will never end hunger in the world without the smallholder farmer being front and centre.

Let me give you an example of how we have strengthened local and regional economies. Take, for example, Africa. Just in 2018 nearly 1.2 million metric tons of commodities worth almost (US) \$510 million was procured. Substantial impact. In 2017 we purchased 1.25 million metric tons of commodities worth over (US) \$490 million. Five years ago, we were purchasing substantially less, about \$365 million worth. I have asked our team to give you an analysis of how many jobs this impacts. We have seen different numbers, but I will hope to have that fine-tuned. It is somewhere roughly 20 million, million and a half, jobs for 2017 and 2018 because of your funds, leveraging



the dollar, impacting local communities, creating economic opportunity which is critical for stabilization and long-term development.

We have also constantly searched for efficiency savings to make our donor dollars work even harder. I am going to give you an example. This past year in South Sudan we saved over (US) \$63 million by reducing air drops and maximizing use of road and river transport. We have done this by keeping the roads open during the rainy season. We have effectively used pre-positioning and greater use of river corridors as well. In 2019 in South Sudan alone we expect to save (US) \$100 million by being more efficient and effective. Another good example is the Global Commodity Management Facility, which enables our teams to buy and pre-position at the right time. It also produces savings, for example, in 2017, (US) \$33 million, in 2018, about \$30 million. \$30 million goes a long way to helping a lot more people stay alive.

As these examples show, operational innovation is at the heart of WFP's strategy to achieve zero hunger. We know business as usual will not get us there. That is why I was recently in China, for example, to agree on cutting-edge partnership with world leading Chinese tech firm Alibaba. This is just one good example but harnessing their expertise in artificial intelligence and data analytics to boost operational efficiency. We are also scaling up the Farm to Market Alliance and creating an online farmers market to support livelihoods and using cash-based transfers to bolster economic growth. In 2018 we will deliver up to (US)\$1.7 billion in cash assistance in over 62 countries. \$785 million of those dollars, 55 percent, are part of the Syrian regional response. WFP analysis shows the impact of cash on local economies. For every dollar, it gives an average return of \$2 in local economy compared to \$1.20 on average on food rations. In 2019 we aim to boost WFP's use of cash further to (US)\$2.17 billion, and that will be approximately 40 percent of all assistance given by WFP. But at the same time, we also need to scale up tried and tested programmes, such as food for assets, nutrition, school meals, to really transform the lives of the people we serve.

In August I visited Niger with my friends Graziano (da Silva) and Gilbert (Houngbo) and many of you in this room. We saw projects that are truly making a difference to the lives of the communities. WFP analysis shows that for every dollar that we invest in effective programmes in Niger alone produces a return of (US)\$3.67 in real terms, creating a potential gain of (US)\$1 billion over 20 years. When we come in with effective programmes, migration drops, teen pregnancy drops, marriage rates drop, conflict between farmers and herders drops, recruitment by ISIS and extremist groups drops. There are financial implications for these positive steps forward -- (US)\$1 billion in just 20 years. But if we take the old approach of just handing out food, we will continue to be doing that for years and decades on end.

I would ask you to please ask Arif (Husain), we have got those financial breakdowns, so you can show your capitals why it is effective to invest and what it means in saving not just dollars but saving lives. Imagine if we could just scale that up, the impact it will have in any nation, our activities, whether it is the Sahel or other places. We need your support. We are building the evidence-base that shows that our programmes work. For example, school feeding -- led by Carmen (Burbano) -- studies of school feeding have shown for every (US)\$1 spent on school meals gives a return of up to (US)\$10 in improved education, health and productivity. Nourished children obviously are able better to learn. Educated kids are wealthier, healthier, more productive adults. The resulting economic growth supports prosperity, stability and peace, as you have seen those numbers from the World Bank.

I am proud of WFP's record as a champion of school feeding. Since 1963, when we served our first school meal in Togo, WFP has worked with over 100 countries. In 2017, the World Food Programme school meals provided 18.3 million children with school meals in 60 nations. We also share our technical know-how and expertise, so WFP can step back as national governments step up. In 2017, we advised national programmes feeding 39 million children. In total, 44 countries have moved from WFP-run to government-led programmes. As I have said before, I would like to



see every programme that WFP implements, that it has an exit strategy, showing we have been successful.

A new WFP commissioned study reveals some very sad news about children living in extreme poverty who are not getting school meals. Seventy-three million children worldwide are missing out. It is heart breaking. The study also pinpoints how much it will cost to bridge the gap -- (US)\$4.6 billion a year. In the poorest country, it only costs about 25 cents per child per meal. WFP cannot reach all 73 million children by ourselves, but we can work together with national governments, donors and partners, and the global coalition to ensure that no child misses out on an education, because we know the long-term benefits that children reap when they receive the precious gift of an education. This is especially true for girls, particularly in difficult cultures where females have been neglected in education. Educating girls is the best way to break the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger passing from one generation to the next. This is why gender equality is so important for WFP.

Yesterday was the start of a global campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Every one of us has a duty to ensure women and girls can live in safety and with the dignity and freedom to achieve their full potential. WFP is committed to playing its full part in this campaign, putting gender equality at the heart of our global operations. For example, in Liberia, WFP is providing take-home rations as an incentive for girls to stay in school. Just 38 percent of the girls attend school; 96 percent for boys. WFP provides 3,600 girls with regular food baskets for attending school and improving the food security of 16,000 family members. Vera, for example, she is 16. She is one of them. She receives take-home rations for her family of five. She is currently completing the fifth grade. But her mother says the family economic situation is better.

It is also important we get our own house in order on gender at the United Nations and the World Food Programme. We must show our commitment to being a good employer for women. We are working hard to ensure all WFP staff understands, there is zero tolerance of sexual harassment and exploitation and abuse of power. This includes staff training, sessions run by Human Resources and a global internal communications campaign called "Respect." And me being tough at every management meeting ... this is not just about what is written in policy, but it is about management. It is about execution. It is about setting the tone at the top and driving it down. We have set some tough gender parity targets to be met by 2021. In the five years prior to my arrival, WFP increased the proportion of female national staff, for example, by 2 percentage points from 28 to 30 percent. But just in the last 18 months from April 2017, when I arrived, to today, we have achieved (another) 2 percentage points from 30 to 32 percent.

Let me give you an example. In DRC, if you remember those of you who were on the Board last year, I called out DRC. Claude (Jibidar), I do not know if Claude (Jibidar) is in here, but I embarrassed him last year. I told him I am going to embarrass him again if he does not get those parity numbers up. DRC since my arrival has increased the number of women by 3 percentage points from 22.4 to 25.3. So, Claude (Jibidar) has been responding. Management is listening. In Nigeria since my arrival, the percentage of women has increased from 28.6 to 32.8. Burkina Faso achieved their 2021 target in just six months, since we established the first baseline, 32 percent all the way through 45 percent. We have significantly upped the pace when it comes to recruiting women, but we have still got a lot to do. For international staff, we aim to achieve gender parity by 2021. This requires a 6 percentage point increase in the next three years. It is a hugely challenging target. We have only managed 2 points in the past six years.

It might seem a daunting task, but I think we have already showcased four or five examples that we can do it. And we will do it as I am holding the managers accountable for this. By 2021 on national staff, we aim to boost the number of women from 32 percent to 40 percent. In many field locations, I know this will not be easy. Some of the sub-offices are dangerous. It is tough. But we will achieve our goals and objectives. And we will commit the necessary resources to make sure we get there because we recognize that the United Nations ought to be a world leader in



these kinds of issues. The World Food Programme is the biggest of the big in the United Nations and we should lead the way. We should set the example. We should be the model and we will execute. Ultimately, our ability to feed the hungry depends on the trust of our donors, which means we must show that we are living up to the highest standards of integrity and fairness. That means treating WFP's dedicated men and women equally.

This year we ran a global staff survey, the first since 2015, to better understand the priorities and concerns of our workforce. The response rate was 85 percent, the highest ever for a large United Nations body. That in itself spoke volumes because men and particularly women feel like they are being heard and that is important. It showed record levels of pride and commitment to WFP's mission. It gives us a rock-solid foundation for delivering our mandate. The survey also showed a strong spirit of team work across WFP, but inevitably it also highlighted areas of opportunity for improvement, a need for more honest feedback and two-way communication. That is extremely important. In all the field visits I have made, I can assure you that I bring this up along with many other issues. Also, improvement area we need to work on is significant numbers of staff who do not feel sufficiently valued by their managers, and also a more systematic approach to career development. This is an issue in the United Nations system that we need to work on.

To improve in these areas, each country office and division has had an open dialogue about their results. We are pushing the country offices, the management to meet with the people, draw up action plans to address the issues revealed. I am personally committed to tackling the issues identified in the survey. Example given; training and equipping managers to lead teams effectively. The Management Plan before this Board for approval also reflects our willingness to invest in WFP's efficiency and effectiveness to ensure we deliver on behalf of the people we serve. Let me give a couple of examples there. (US)\$11 million in Workforce 2020 programme to boost training. That is essential. (US)\$20 million in digital transformation into the digital, technological era and how that can save extraordinary amounts of money and be more effective. (US)\$8 million in United Nations reform programming.

We are also fulfilling our pledge to leverage humanitarian dollars to deliver sustainable long-term results. Ten percent of the (US)\$6.8 billion projected revenue for 2019 will move from crisis response to resilience building programmes. Every humanitarian dollar should also be seen as an opportunity for improving communities. At the same time, we are prioritizing enterprise, independent oversight and risk management, as well as anti-fraud, anti-corruption activities, strengthening systems to safeguard resources and ensure that every dollar or euro or yen reaches the intended beneficiary. This will ensure even greater transparency and accountability. Revisions to WFP's General Rules and Financial Regulations before the Board for approval this week will further enforce WFP's future effectiveness. It is a milestone marking WFP's transition to a results-oriented framework ensuring solid governance for country strategic plans.

Finally, a focus on efficiency is guiding WFP's approach to United Nations reform. We are already starting to see results. Six United Nations agencies, such as WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and ILO – it took me a year and a half to figure out what all those acronyms are, but I am getting there – we six have reached an agreement to mutually recognize our business procedures and policies. That may not seem like a big deal, but it is. It is a big deal. Data sharing agreements with UNHCR is a big deal. We are moving in the right direction. We have much more to do. This is just an early outcome of the work by the Business Innovation Group. It shows our commitment, our joint commitment to be more effective and more efficient. We do not have to wait on New York for reform. As I have said many times before, if we have a problem at WFP with FAO or UNHCR or UNICEF, I pick up the phone and call Henrietta (Fore) or Filippo (Grandi) or Graziano (da Silva) or they can call me. Let us hope that this reform gives us the flexibility to achieve more great successes. The World Food Programme, in my opinion, is a classic model for the world to see that the United Nations can be an effective operation because I believe that the United Nations is



needed today more than any time period in world history with all the vision and all the instability and all of the conflicts.

Excellencies, we have achieved a great deal in 2018. We have overcome many challenges. We have delivered life-saving help to millions of people around the world. For 2019, the ongoing support and collaboration of this Board is critical to ensure that WFP can fulfil our mission in the year ahead. We need your engagement. Not just on the small things but also the big picture. We together must look at every country to see what it is going to take to achieve zero hunger in every country because these are not just numbers. These are little girls and little boys who have names. These little girls and little boys who have dreams and hopes and we must not let them down. That is why when someone asks me are you not tired from all that travel, I am inspired by what I see on the ground. I am encouraged when I look into the eyes of the children when they get support from the World Food Programme because we are there for them giving them hope. We do not deliver just food. We deliver hope and dreams.

The World Food Programme over the next four days working with you in this Board, we hope to have an open and honest conversation and explore how we can do more, how we can be the best at saving lives and changing lives. I look forward to this relaxing week with you, Mr President.

