

Opening statement by the Grand Bargain Eminent Person, Sigrid Kaag, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, at the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting, 15 June 2021

Check against delivery

Ladies and gentlemen,

Five years ago, we signed the Grand Bargain.

I would have liked to welcome you to Amsterdam – where the first negotiations took place – to mark the occasion.

Instead, we are meeting virtually, but we still have plenty to celebrate. So let me just say: welcome to the 2021 Grand Bargain Annual Meeting!

Let us, for a moment, go back to the beginning: 2015. Humanitarian needs far outstripped humanitarian financing.

The UN Secretary-General asked a panel for recommendations on how to address this humanitarian financing gap. They produced a report titled 'Too important to fail'. It called for greater efficiency and effectiveness and included the proposal for the Grand Bargain, signed in 2016. Today marks its fifth anniversary. So where do we stand?

The world has changed since 2016, but some things have not:

- Millions of people around the world still suffer from crises, conflicts and disasters. COVID-19 has exacerbated this.
- The humanitarian financing gap still exists, and the mission of fixing it is still 'too important to fail'.
- The ambitions expressed in the Bargain have lost none of their importance, or their urgency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Grand Bargain is a unique humanitarian platform.

It unites different constituencies on the basis of common challenges, and the search for better answers. It helps signatories to cooperate, and to improve their humanitarian efforts. I am proud to have been a part of this unique forum.

Since 2016, this forum has enabled progress:

- More people can meet their needs through cash-based programming, and localisation is an increasingly important principle in humanitarian assistance.
- The needs of affected people are better reflected in our responses through better analysis.
- Gender equality is embedded more deeply in the Bargain.
- The simplified reporting format might give aid workers more time to assist those in need.

But in other areas, we are still falling short.

- We have not seen a participation revolution: affected people are still not always listened to or included.
- The potential for cost savings through reduction of duplication and management costs have not been realised as hoped for in 2016.

Five years on, we can see a change – but not yet a revolution.

However: the small, well-considered improvements made in the last few years have laid the foundations for even bolder initiatives.

For this, we need continued ownership, confidence and trust. Today, we consider the future of the Bargain. The Grand Bargain 2.0: more focused, less technical, more integrated.

I call on everyone to support the framework and to share the risks inherent in providing humanitarian assistance. To help start a conversation on risk, the Netherlands and the ICRC have prepared a statement that offers concrete actions that signatories can take to improve risk-sharing. We hope that this will help with the implementation of the Grand Bargain 2.0.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Grand Bargain alone cannot close the humanitarian financing gap. On Thursday, the Netherlands is hosting a side event, focusing on the Grand Bargain's sister pillars from the 2016 Panel report: shrinking humanitarian needs and widening the resource base. A lot of work has been done on these goals, but it has been less coordinated than the Grand Bargain.

We need to know which initiatives actually help reduce the financing gap. We must maintain momentum until all our incremental steps add up to real change for affected people.

Today is my last day as Eminent Person. I am delighted to hand over this role to my experienced and highly capable successor: Jan Egeland, who I am sure will do an excellent job.

In my last act as Eminent Person, I call on all of you to support the Framework for the Grand Bargain 2.0, to work with Jan in his new role, and to take ownership!

Thank you.