

Opening statement by Jan Egeland, Grand Bargain incoming Eminent Person

Thank you very much, Sigrid. For all that you did, for us that are partners in the Grand Bargain and for people in need.

I listened carefully to all that you said now, to the important dialogue so far and I am really in agreement with the priorities that you have set out. Your wisdom is important to me. I am glad you said that you will stay engaged and I am glad that I can call upon you and the Netherlands to help the Grand Bargain advance.

I would also like to thank you and the others for the vote of confidence. This is a role that I look forward to trying to fulfil to pursue the goals of the Grand Bargain. I would also like to thank the Facilitation Group for their hard work. I agree with the Grand Bargain 2.0. I think it is wise to try to zoom in on some priority issues.

I would also like to thank all who prepared for this meeting. It is a very impressive production, and it is good to listen to the statements showing all the support for the Grand Bargain but also what is needed now, what is lacking, and which are our priorities. We have also had a lot of input, including from the Friends of Gender, the NGO statements and the risk sharing statement. There are so many things that we can now take forward.

One word about myself, what do I bring to this? I do bring some experience from the humanitarian world. I started out 44 years ago in a local Colombian Catholic relief organisation as a field worker. Then I was for seven years the Norwegian State Secretary responsible for humanitarian affairs. I know the donor realities. I had my first job out of university with the international Red Cross here in Geneva and then I was later in the Norwegian Red Cross. Then I have been with the United Nations in several positions, including as Emergency Relief Coordinator. And I am now with the international NGO world. I think I know the various actors and what we have seen is that when we come together, we can move things forward.

It is not easy to do reform in this complex world of ours. There are so many multilateral and international processes that reach a dead end. This one has not. As Minister Kaag and other speakers have said, there has been progress in a number of areas because donors, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the NGOs came together to push things forward.

And then there are a lot of issues where we have a big job ahead of us. Clearly, we need to make progress now and it is my job to help spur that, challenge and convene. And also, to ask what did you really mean in the 5-page paper that asked for bold action and a quantum leap because it may at times be a little bit unclear what is on paper.

For me, the test of progress is with the people we are there to serve. Three weeks ago, I was in the Kivus in Eastern DRC. I was there when the volcano erupted in Goma, a graphic illustration and realisation of how bad it really is. I met a widow with five children who had fled from the volcano and I naively asked her if she didn't know it was dangerous to live there. She said she is so poor it was the only land she could afford. It is the Kivu test that we should pass when we try to make progress in the Grand Bargain. We should make it better for this woman and her children. They have nowhere to go now as they lost everything in the eruption.

When I saw the outcomes of the High-Level Panel five years back, I was delighted. A Grand Bargain to make our work more effective and efficient. We do not have a penny or a cent to lose. Secondly, work to shrink the needs. Prevention is possible. And thirdly, we need to have more resources in a world that is as affluent as ours. All three goals are there. In the Grand

Bargain, we focus on the first objective, first and foremost, but we do not forget the other ones.

The goal was to end the sense that millions suffer alone - as they still do. A colleague earlier mentioned Tigray. We have a famine on our watch there. I was on the Sudanese-Tigrayan border in December last year. It was obvious that we would be on this position unless we took tremendous action, yet our collective action has been inadequate up until this point and people are now in famine.

The Grand Bargain 2.0 focusing on political action, I think that is extremely important. We need to have the biggest donors agree with us to make everything more effective and efficient on the highest level. We have the fantastic ODI study, we do not need a million more studies. We can do it. We can have more quality funding, which is the first of the two focus areas. Quality funding really means that our aid workers from local organisations, from international organisations and elsewhere, have the funding they need when they need it. It also means less bureaucracy. We cannot waste this much time on unnecessary action. Localisation is super important. We need to have the local groups feel that they are at the centre of action. And finally, the participation revolution, I agree with you it is an area where we need to make a quantum leap. It is not about us. They need to tell us how we are doing and how we can improve.

So, I look forward to working with all of you in meeting the big task of realising the Grand Bargain.

Thank you.