

**World Hunger ? What's my dream to solve this problem?**  
— **Special Guest Address at WFP Dublin Global Meeting**  
**Opening Ceremony** —

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Jim,

I really do not know how I can thank you for your very kind introduction. I cannot easily tell you how grateful I am to you for giving me such a wonderful occasion to share with the WFP staff my dream on how to fight back hunger.

Hunger, this word takes me back to the year 1950 when I was born, as there was almost nothing left in my country. I apologize for mentioning another institution, UNICEF, which provided milk for school feeding in Japan, and I was one of those who drank the UNICEF milk, skimmed milk at school. Well I only wish they had given me a little more of calcium, then I would have had a few more centimeters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dublin today is a symbol of dynamism. Dublin today is a success story of globalization. And Dublin is the town that I love because I spent a part of my childhood here. At that time my Irish friends told me about the potato famine that led to the exodus of Irish people.

This fact tells us that hunger can happen in any civilization and hunger is not someone else's problem.

1. Lack of Human Security

I believe that each and every person of some 6 billion people has the right to live and not merely to survive. Each person has also the right to be called

by his or her name since the birth, to have identity, and to live with dignity.

But the reality is, one baby out of five or six dies at their birth in many sub-Saharan African countries, infectious diseases and hunger kill one boy out of seven and one girl out of eight in that continent. If luckily survived, African girl spends six hours a day walking and searching for three buckets of water, instead of going to school.

Another reality is, in year 2000, there were 16 million refugees and, in 2002, there were more than 25 million internally displaced persons. Many of them are hungry. Many of them do not have father or husband. They are indeed the most vulnerable people and are put in such a plight mostly because of conflict.

In this connection it is without pleasure that I must announce a new world record. That is this year's UN budget of PKO, which will amount up to 4.5 billion dollars, that is more than double of last year's PKO budget and larger than this year's UN regular budget. We all know that with that amount, almost all newly born children of the world can be immunized, almost all children in need can get micro-nutrient, and indeed many children can get school lunch. Thus, we can say that conflict is the enemy of children and, conflict is the largest cause of hunger.

Unfortunately, girls and women face other kind of real danger caused not by conflict, but by poverty, hunger and lack of governance. That is human trafficking.

Those are some of the problems that come to my mind to illustrate lack of human security.

## 2. Ordinary People's Hope as the engine to solve problems

Unfortunately, there is no single answer to solve all of these problems at once. I believe that peace, security and good governance are three prerequisites to realize predictability, political and economic participation and culture of conflict prevention. And these 'treble P', i.e. predictability, participation and prevention, will give HOPE to ordinary people. Indeed if ordinary people can hope that tomorrow can be better than today, they will invest in future in various forms, such as educate their children, take care of their health and sincerely love their partner. Indeed, ordinary people have potential entrepreneurship and if combined with hope they will fight back

hunger.

Let me first talk about entrepreneurship.

In sub-Saharan Africa, farmers with hope do have entrepreneurship. We can count many concrete examples of sub-Saharan African farmers' entrepreneurship. Spread of cassava is a good example and let me talk about it, since I lived in Kinshasa with my family when I was young and know about the importance of Cassava as a main food in sub-Saharan Africa. Cassava came to the Kingdom of Kongo in the 16th century from the new continent, spread inland via different routes: one by local traders, the other by a wise policy of local king. The local traders traveled in the Lower Zaire River region connecting the Kingdom of Kongo with the upstream pool and higher reaches of the Zaire River. When local farmers saw cassava which those traders had brought together with cooking method, they found merit in its production stability, and little by little cassava took the position of the main food in the region, replacing sorghum and millet. Later, in the 19th century, there was another important spread of cassava in the inland Kingdom of Luba (today's Shaba region). It was triggered by the order of a king who found that cassava strongly resists locust attack and can be used as an emergency food in case of famine. Local farmers welcomed the order, because not only did they agree to the merit of the crop, but they also found that they could harvest it during the off-season for traditional cereals. In the 20th century, cassava was not the Belgian colonial authorities preferences, but the production of cassava in the Lower Zaire region increased, because of market-economy logic: on the demand side, city dwellers in Leopoldville (today's Kinshasa) wanted cassava as their principal food, and on the supply side farmers understood correctly the usefulness of the railway connecting Leopoldville with the downstream port of Matadi which happened to pass through their province. A similar increase in the production of cassava happened in Bandundu region when a paved road was constructed after independence.

### 3. Community Building around a village school

Now let me turn to hope. In this world where we all live, unfortunately the three prerequisite that I mentioned earlier, i.e. peace, security and good governance are not necessarily guaranteed. The tragic 9.11 attack taught us

that even the mightiest country in the world can not always guaranty the security of people who live within its boarder. Security of daily life does not exist in many countries. I even don't need to lament bad governance that we witness in some corners of the world.

If that is the case, another option is to enhance resilience of each and every individual through empowerment. Empowerment of babies by immunization, empowerment of children by universal education, empowerment of women by literacy, empowerment of youth by HIV prevention education, empowerment of ordinary people by mastering daily life skill, empowerment of inhabitants by gathering under a tree or around a water well. And this will lead to human networking and community building. This will also lead to a community where people can have hope.

Hunger can be fought back through this kind of process as well.

And my dream is a school at the center of a village that would be a community center. A water well may be dug in the school court because it will save six hours a day water carrying and give time to girls to come to school. Furthermore, water well in school yard will engender interest among villagers about school. In this connection, water well should be managed by a villagers' committee and if possible charge a very low price to water, since experiences tell us that ownership on maintenance and management is born in this way.

Villagers' evening gathering may be organized under an electric lamp of a classroom thank to a small windmill generator or small solar panel on the roof of the school. Is it not a grass root democracy? Eventually they may listen to radio or if possible watch television or video with information on agriculture or weather.

My school of dream will also have toilets for girls and boys, especially for girls since we know that lack of toilets for girls is a huge inhibition for girls to come to school. These toilets should preferably be sawdust-bacteria toilets because that is not only neat but also produce fertilizer for local farmers. More importantly, a small but neat house should be annexed for the school teacher since we know that in Africa, like in many other continents, teachers do not like to go to remote villages. Incidentally, plenty of used bicycles in Japan or Europe may be sent to African village teachers as gift together with a small kit to repair puncture.

And the core of my dream is school feeding. You call it food for education

do you not?

But in my school of dream, it is local agricultural products that are cooked for lunch or breakfast. As a result local farmers can gain three times. Once when the school purchases farmers' crop. Twice when farmers' children eat free of charge at school. Three times, when children bring back home extra food to home. WFP report told me that this can be not a mere dream but a reality, showing us concrete statistical figures of double digit increase of girls' school attendance in school where girls take back home some food.

Thus school feeding will empower girls, both in nutrition and intellectual meaning.

I am also confident that this three times win-win school feeding method will deter girl's trafficking. We must, though it is a very sad thing, look at the fact that it is often very poor parents who sell their children in spite of themselves. If this win-win school feeding is widely implemented, parents may not need to sell their daughters because now their daughters earn in-kind income so to speak.

Incidentally, I am wondering why a kind of street class can not be organized in refugee's camp, around food distribution hour instead of simply distributing food. A 'food for education' - refugee camp version.

Jim, distinguished participants, I would like to reiterate my deepest gratitude to have given me this occasion to share with you my humble dream.

Due to parliamentary committee that is discussing several conventions for ratification, I must catch tomorrow morning flight. May I wish you a very successful meeting and further success of humanitarian activities that World Food Programme pursues.

Thank you very much indeed for your kind attention.

**\*This year's WFP Global Meeting was held under the theme 'Our work is so important - how can we do more to solve the growing problem of world hunger - and do it better?' in Dublin, 7-10 June, 2004**