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THE
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Speech given by

Chair of The Norwegian
Nobel Committee
Berit Reiss-Andersen

World Food Programme

Oslo, 10 December, 2021.

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Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Food creates community and gives pleasure. Food is our most basic need, but it does in fact feed more than our bodies. Most religions command a moral duty to share food and food is often a part of religious rituals. Lack of food is detrimental to our existence and I maintain that it is a universal duty to ensure that all people are fed. The World Food Programme carries out this duty on behalf of the United Nations and on behalf of the international community.

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to the World Food Programme (WFP) addressed more issues than the humanitarian aspect of food. In its announcement in 2020, the Norwegian Nobel Committee stated that the WFP was awarded the prize

“...for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to better conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.”

Access to food and fair distribution of resources are a defence against social distress and conflict. Starvation is an effect of war and conflict, but may also serve as a weapon to starve out the enemy. Food insecurity and hunger may create conflict, as war and conflict may cause food insecurity and even famine. The WFP actively intervenes in conflict-ridden areas to prevent these negative consequences. Unfortunately, there is greater need than ever for the work of the World Food Programme, given the ongoing conflicts in Yemen, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and other conflict-torn areas of the world.

The award of the 2020 Peace Prize to the World Food Programme is compliant with the will of Alfred Nobel, as the organization’s work fosters fraternity between nations and promotes the abolishment of the use of hunger as a weapon of war. I am happy that the WFP and its director David Beasley were finally able to come to Oslo to deliver the Nobel lecture.