**UNON Director-General’s remarks for the Lions Day with the UN event,**

**27 February 2018**

* **[Government of Kenya representative],**
* **Dr. Naresh Aggarwal, International President of the Lions Club International,**
* **Dr. Ashok Mehta, Past International President of the Lions Club International,**
* **Members of Lions Clubs from around the world,**
* **Invited guests,**
* **UN colleagues,**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is an honour to welcome you to the United Nations Office at Nairobi for this ‘Lions Day with the United Nations’ event.**

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**I would firstly like to pay tribute to the Lions Club for the work your volunteers carry out to improve the well-being of people everywhere -- a noble objective which is also**

**at the heart of the United Nations’ own agenda.**

**Indeed, the Lions Club and the United Nations have so much in common.**

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**Our two organisations share the vision of a world in which people from all different countries work together, in solidarity, to assist those in need, and to build a better world for all. From your Mission Statement, we know that the Lions aim “to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding”.**

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**The UN Charter enshrines similar values, committing nations “to combine their efforts to promote international peace and security and better standards of life in larger freedom.” But of course, it is not surprising that your Mission Statement and the UN Charter sound similar - since the Lions contributed to the drafting of the Charter in 1945.**

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**Helping to formulate the UN’s founding document was the first sign of the deep and enduring partnership that would follow over the subsequent 73 years, leading to today.**

**The consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, which your global organization has enjoyed since 1947, is another recognition of the importance of the Lions Club to the UN’s mission.**

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**Apart from our shared values and ideals, our relationship has extended to countless projects in the field, where various UN agencies and the Lions club have worked side-by-side to provide tangible and often life-saving assistance to vulnerable populations. The Lions Club and the United Nations system have worked together on many successful humanitarian efforts –**

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**from the Sight First programme that has helped restore vision to more than 30 million people worldwide; to the School in a Box project, which provides basic school supplies in one kit to ensure the continuation of children's education even in crisis situations; to tree-planting and recycling endeavours aimed at saving the environment.**

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**I can assure you that the United Nations deeply values this strong collaboration. And we will continue to count on Lions Club members to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development -- our masterplan for people, planet and prosperity over the next 13 years.**

**In this connection, I commend you for the theme you have chosen for this Day –**

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**‘Working Together Globally to Combat Diabetes’. Diabetes is a global health epidemic that impacts hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Reducing** **premature mortality from diabetes and other non-communicable diseases is one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 3 - Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.**

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**I would also like to thank you for deciding, once again, to organize the Day here at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, together with similar Days in Geneva and New York.**

**As the only UN Headquarters in Africa, and indeed in the entire global South, the United Nations complex in Nairobi is a very fitting venue for the ‘Lions Day with the UN’ event.**

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**Here on this compound, over 3,500 dedicated staff members of the United Nations work on a daily basis to advance the goals and values of the Organisation, including the SDGs, not only in Kenya but also in the region and around the world.**

**In addition to serving as UNON’s home, Nairobi hosts the global headquarters of two very important UN programmes,**

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**the UN Environment Programme and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). This compound is also the base for scores of offices of the UN agencies, funds and programmes that serve some of the world’s most vulnerable populations. And UNON also hosts UN Special Political Missions and peace support operations mandated by the Security Council, such as the Office of the Special**

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**Envoy for the Great Lakes region and the United Nations Support Office for Somalia.**

**The members of the UN community based at this headquarters in Africa have a special opportunity to advance the goals and values of the Organisation.**

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**That is because, compared to the other UN Headquarters duty stations, we are living and working in closer proximity to the people who are most in need of our support and assistance, and where the most progress has to be made if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030.**

**Collectively, the work carried out from this**

**UN compound is vital for the success of the 2030 Agenda.**

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**This is the UN in the real world. You are now in ‘SDG-Central’.**

**That is why your presence here today is so much appreciated, and so relevant. If Africa is to reach the 17 SDGs by 2030, we need the support and engagement of everyone – Governments, the UN, the private sector, civil society, the media, academia, and dedicated global citizens like you.**

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**Your meeting here at UNON is a testament to your commitment to the UN, and to this continent. Thank you for travelling to Nairobi from so many different countries to join us, and to reaffirm the unwavering cooperation between our two organizations.**

**I wish you a productive and successful conference.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**

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