

Eurasian Scout Conference - Baku, 2004
Words from the Secretary General of WOSM
to the Plenary of the Eurasian Scout Conference

Dear Sisters and Brothers Scouts,

A little over a year ago I received an e-mail from a person until then unknown to me. He introduced himself as a consultant of a global executives search - "headhunters" - a company with an apparently brilliant career in the highest ranks of the corporate sector.

My name had been suggested by people in UNICEF, and he asked if I would be interested in competing for the post of Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

I would have erased the message quickly, and considered it "spam", electronic garbage, had I not seen the word "Scout".

I answered saying that, if that was not a joke, it was a great honour for me even to have only been contacted for that position. I sent him my CV.

I did not hear from him for over three months, then he wrote to me again informing me that, after the first round, I was among the first 105 candidates and I was invited to an interview.

Just over a month later, and after a surprising selection process, without having ever applied for the post, nor even having dreamt of it, I found myself for the first time before the World Scout Committee. I had been selected and now I was being asked to confirm my acceptance to serve as the Secretary General of world Scouting.

Clearly, a Higher Sign. Once again I said: "Yes", accepting the challenge.

The great Latin American poet José Martí once wrote: "The place of a man is where he is most useful", let me hope that God (and the World Committee) made the right choice. Now for me that place is here.

"Do you want to become a member of the great Scout family?"

It was the 7th of July of 1965 when, in front of the Rome 24 Scout troop, with my left hand on the group's flag and my right hand in the Scout salute I pronounced for the first time that word: "Yes", committing myself, on my honour, to be a Scout "God willing, forever".

After becoming a Medical Doctor, I was inspired by the life of the famous Suisse doctor Albert Schweitzer who devoted his life to care for people with leprosy in the village of Lambarané in Cameroun, and I decided follow his example and I left for Africa as a medical volunteer.

But as "destiny waits in the hands of God", instead of in Africa, I ended up in Nicaragua, in Central America, in a rural area where the living conditions are not dissimilar to those existing in most parts of poor rural Africa.

The decision to become a medical doctor and to serve through my profession those who suffer illness and disease was deeply rooted in the Scout promise and the values we all share, and so was the new decision to take care "of the poorest amongst the poor".

Thus, I left the Scout group where I had been for 15 years, where I had served as a leader both in the Scout and in the Rover sections.

Departing on my new mission, I thought the time had come to put away the Scout scarf forever. Nevertheless, as promised, I would remain a Scout forever.

In Nicaragua, Scouting was now for me the challenge of reaching, on foot or on a horse, isolated rural communities, which had never before received medical attention. Scouting was now to share their work, their food, their homes, their concerns, their hopes.

Years later, Scouting was my commitment to do my best as a UNICEF officer, in Mexico, as well as dedicating extra time during the weekends to volunteering as a medical doctor in the slums of Mexico City.

Later on, I served for 16 years in the Italian Development Cooperation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for health and social development programmes with Latin America and the Caribbean, and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a scout, I unfortunately had to fight not only against poverty and diseases, but also against my own bureaucracy for assistance to be appropriate, transparent, efficient and effective.

I was driven by the Scout spirit when I became an assistant professor at the prestigious School of Management of the Bocconi University in Milan, recognizing in the new task a service to future generations of international leaders.

Finally, here I am, as a Scout (but now once again with the scout scarf around my neck!), to share with you the legacy of our Founder BP, to do our best to leave this world better than we found it. Committed to the Scout Movement (and again in the Movement) towards a future of Peace and full social justice.

With you and the millions of Scout sisters and brothers of the world to build a global Scout Movement and through our Movement a global society where all, with no distinctions, will have the right and the concrete opportunity to actively and fully participate. Overcoming all types of prejudice and sectarianism, breaking all those cultural, social, economic and political barriers, that in the present society promote conflicts.

Scouting has given me a unique experience. When I recently visited Nyeri in Kenya, I paid a visit to BP and Olave's grave. There, at the end of their path, I initially felt that I could only pronounce two words: "Thank You".

But Scouting was now presenting me with an new enormous challenge. Therefore I prayed: "Help me".

We have, sisters and brothers, a great responsibility:

The outcome of our effort will depend on the quality of the education that we offer to our girls and boys, our young women and men: from the quality of Scouting.

But how do we measure the quality of our work at local, national or global level?

Not by the increase in membership. What if we register millions of new scouts every year and the same children are lost one year later?

If we want to make the difference, we need to develop "autonomous, supportive and responsible individuals who are capable of contributing effectively to the development of society" it is our Mission.

We can expect this to be accomplished only at the end of possible continuous, complete personal progression envisaged by the Scout method, possibly from the age when children are able to cooperate within a group (this is 6-7 yrs.) to the age when young people enter into adulthood (20-22). But the most critical period remains from adolescence to early adulthood. The number of young people that leave the Rover section and remain a "Scout forever" in their human, professional, social and political commitment, this is the number that will measure our success and a possible indicator of our impact on society.

However to be effective in applying the Scout method, at all ages, we need trained and motivated adults.

A comprehensive approach through all ages of Scouting and a renewed investment on the Rover section so that we may retain some of them as Scout leaders may offer part of the solution. But it will take a long time, too long for the challenges we are facing. It is vital to also attract and recruit other young adult volunteers, intensively committed with values and methods from the Movement.

People of this quality need to be dissuaded from other options that exist in the community. It is useless if we stay with the first that knocks on our door and comes to us because he or she has nothing to do anywhere else and comes to do it here.

“We are a movement, not an organization” BP told us, concerned with the bureaucratic evolution of Scouting. But to thrive, the Movement – Scout units and groups everywhere - needs to be supported. This is the task of National Organizations, and of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, especially of the World Scout Bureau. I believe that more emphasis should be put on the strategic priority "An organization for the XXI century".

An important step is the creation of common criteria for the modernisation of our associations. For the Movement to grow globally, it is necessary also that its member Organizations progress.

As I was able to see, in various Regions many of the problems often have their roots in the lack of a modern organizational culture and good administration. This may need some more direct and sustained assistance from the Regional office of the World Scout Bureau, for National Organizations in difficulty with the implementation of the Scout programme. In countries where scouting has been only recently introduced or where it has not yet really taken off, the collaboration and strong partnerships with other National Scout Organizations with a well rooted scout tradition represents another opportunity for support and exchange of experience. In the Eurasian Region there are undoubtedly some very good examples, and I believe that a special thank should be tributed to the generous support from the Boys Scouts of America.

Inter-regional coordination and exchange should be further promoted and actively built as it may play a fundamental role in the development of scouting in the Eurasian Region. In this respect I believe that the co-operation with the European Region may offer many still unexplored opportunities.

The World Bureau is in the best position to serve as a link between experiences, to facilitate the sharing of acquired knowledge, to appropriately channel solidarity from other Regions and National Organizations, to optimize existing resources and even to mobilize new resources within and outside the Movement.

To serve you better, at the level of World Scout Bureau we are presently dealing with innovation and reengineering.

Notwithstanding a high degree of decentralisation with clearly defined levels of responsibility and accountability, we are putting emphasis on the unity of our Organization.

We want it younger, with an increasing number of young executives, and an extensive participation of youth representatives in decision-making.

A modern, solid, dynamic, efficient and especially effective organisation, capable of quickly reacting to the continuous transformations of scenario in the context of the globalization process, but at the same time deeply rooted in tradition and values, that which makes Scouting unique.

An organization that serves the Movement in order to offer to an ever growing number of young people the extraordinary educational experience of excellent quality Scouting.

Improving the capacity to listen and interpret the new concerns and aspirations of the youth of today, offering them answers for their future.

Almost 100 years ago, BP identified in every Scout a "citizen of the world", a real protagonist of change, a builder of Peace.

Peace is the focus in the preparations for the 100th anniversary of Scouting. So, be prepared with your Gifts for Peace.

More and more, today, a "global citizen" who carries out projects starting from a full social, economic and political life participation in her or his local community.

A process that starts involving Scouts in community development initiatives as an integral part of our Programme.

A process that must include wherever possible children and young people in difficult circumstances that society has excluded, rejected, leaving them in the street, alone, pushing them into violence and crime.

A process that must progressively involve more girls and young women, offering them increasing opportunities and responsibilities in the scout Movement and in Society.

“In a great Movement, with a great objective, there is no space for minor personal efforts; we need to abandon small ideas and join our arms as a "team" that allows us to face the whole effectively. Cooperation is the only way if we want to reach success".
Let's follow BP's advise.

Planning and implementation of a comprehensive resource mobilisation strategy is now among the highest priorities of the WSB.

To this purpose it is fundamental that National Scout Organizations contribute, providing all possible information on existing or planned cooperation initiatives, circulate projects, ideas, and information. At the same time National Scout Organization must do their best to actively mobilize resources at national level, as it is not wise nor coherent with the scout law and spirit to rely mostly on external resources ("a scout is thrifty").

To widen the network the new World Scout Bureau will work with interregional strategic teams and will pro-actively look for the participation of volunteers with the required competence and a number of scout related organizations and institutions that may be accredited as World Scout Collaborative Centres.

For the creation of a cooperative environment and to ensure the best internal communication in the Movement, we must know how to take advantage of modern technology of information and communication. Taking advantage of new technologies with will try to facilitate the systematic circulation of information, the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as a missing open intensive debate on the fundamentals of the scout method.

Also within the technological context, as Scouts, we want to be pioneers, leaders, to open new frontiers, exploring and adopting technologies that are appropriate for our tasks and that are widely accessible, reflect our principles, and values.

The definition of a WSB policy on the adoption of open-source, open-standard software, is an example of the direction we have taken.

I am committed to assure maximum transparency in the administration of resources, clearly linking budget to strategy, objectives, outcomes and activities. A new Strategic Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation unit has already been established at the WSB.

If we want our voice to be heard, it is necessary to communicate our achievements.
Raising the profile of Scouting is one of the priorities of the Movement.

That is why one of the first decisions I took was to strengthen the external communications area of the World Bureau and we are now planning a comprehensive communication strategy.

Again, the primary source of information is national organizations, and it is vital that they systematically report their achievements and help us to build an international network of Scout reporters.

At the same time we will need to work together in order to identify Scouts working with the national and international media and with them establish a strategic alliance to promote positive information on scouting.

Finally, to accomplish our mission, we also need allies among other international and global actors, especially Programmes and Agencies of the United Nations and others like the Red Cross and

movements and organizations in civil society, especially other youth movements,, that are closer to our issues and share our concerns and our vision.

We are already credible partners of many organizations of the United Nations system. I recently signed a memorandum of understanding with UNEP to facilitate collaboration at various levels. A similar framework agreement is underway with UNICEF, not to mention the high interest shown by UNAIDS or the growing interest of World Bank to collaborate with us.

But we need to explore the collaboration also with other sectors of society: such as the academic world (an agreement is ready to be signed with the most prestigious Italian school of management, the SDA-Bocconi in Milan), public administration and the corporate sector. We must stress that investing in Scouting is investing in the future of humanity. Obviously, we must be very selective in choosing our allies: we have to care for the respect of our values and our image and apply rigorous ethical standards in the selection of partners, including especially those who offer us financial contributions. To this purpose we are elaborating a specific code of conduct.

We can change the world, and we will have to do it before the present world changes us.

There are many challenges and a long path forward. But as Scouts we are prepared, we know how to face difficulties "singing and whistling".

Only preserving this joy, this spontaneity, sharing our cultures, uniting our energy and enthusiasm... all together we will be able to leave this world a little better than we found it. This is our ultimate goal. "Change the world for better, be a scout".

Sisters and brothers, once again: I promise I will do my best, and with your help and trust, even more.