Executive Coordinator's remarks on the occasion of International Volunteer Day 2023 in Mogadishu

Toily Kurbanov, Executive Coordinator of United Nations Volunteers was in Mogadishu to mark International Volunteer Day, on 5 December 2023, with volunteers in Somalia. Here are his remarks as part of the International Volunteer Day event.

Your Excellency, Minister of Youth and Sports, dear friends and colleagues,

The person speaking on the video like a robot was me.

The message was to the global audience.

Today I would like some personal remarks for you, UN Volunteers in Somalia.
I came here to present personal greetings not only from myself, as the Executive Coordinator, but also from 13,000 UN Volunteers around the world. We know of you, we hear about you and we appreciate all what you do.

Two weeks ago I was in China and they asked me to stay for IVD. But I told them that I am going to Mogadishu. The UN volunteers in China asked me to bring their greetings to you. *Nihao!*

Two months ago I was in Peru and they said I should come back for IVD. But I told them that I am going to Mogadishu. Then UN volunteers in Peru asked me to bring to you their greetings. *Buenos dias!*

Last year I was on IVD in Yemen and there they also told me to come back. When they learned I am planning to come to Mogadishu, they also asked me to pass greetings. *Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatu!*

All of this to say that you are not alone. Even if you are the only UN Volunteer in your unit, and don’t get to meet other volunteers often, and can get lost on this compound, there are 13,000 other UN Volunteers like you. Some maybe of the same or different age, work in the same or another agency, have similar or another role, but they are like you.

Like you they share the same concerns, and have issues with UVP or VLA. But more importantly, they are just as committed, devoted and persevering.

And they never give up.

Because volunteers think big, act bold and care a lot.

Remember: you are a part of a global legion, the vast network of UN volunteers worldwide.

My final reflection is about Somalia.

For many UN colleagues, their defining moment was with UNV.

For George (Conway, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General) it was in Indonesia, for Lionel (Lauren, UNDP Resident Representative) it was Laos, for other colleagues that defining moment was with UNV in Kosovo, Sudan, Timor and other countries.

Your defining moment may be in Somalia.

There is something common in UN history that UNV and Somalia share with each other.

UNV was established by the UN General Assembly resolution in 1970 and started
functioning in 1971. It so happens that at that very time, 1970-1971, Somalia was elected to the UN Security Council. A young nation, only 10 years old, was already playing an important role in on the global scene.

Today Somalia is writing a new chapter of its history and you are writing this new chapter together with Somalians. And, hopefully, amongst you will soon in future have many more national UN Volunteers contributing to the bright future of Somalia.

But already now, for everything that you do, and that you represent, I say: thank you, merci, gracias, xiexie, shukran, spasibo — and mahadisanid.

Watch the Executive Coordinator’s video message for International Volunteer Day 2023

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