



## **Welcome speech of Mr Jacques Vandenschrik President of European Food Banks Federation**

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis, Honorable members of the European Parliament and of the European Commission, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends' members of our board, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you today to participate to the official opening of the European Food Banks Federation offices in Brussels.

Your Excellency, allow me to extend a more personalized welcome to the following persons:

Mr Bernard Dandrel, founder of Food Banks in Europe and  
Mrs Lisa Moon, President and CEO of the Global FoodBanking Network

It is indeed my pleasure to welcome you to this momentous occasion that in my view represents a great deal more than just the official opening of the headquarters of the European Food Banks Federation in Brussels. Today is the day where our Federation says loud and clear to all stakeholders involved with the prevention of food waste, safeguarding our earth and improving the food security of disadvantaged populations that we, as a European collective of Food Banks representing 388 Food Banks active in 24 countries thanks to its 44700 affiliated charities distributing the equivalent of 4,1 million meals per day.

Our action started quite some time ago when the first Food Bank in Europe was established in Paris in 1984. Very quickly thereafter another Food Bank was planned in Brussels and on 23 September 1986, in Brussels, the Fédération Européenne des Banques Alimentaires was proclaimed together with the establishment of the Brussels-Brabant Food Bank.

Bernard Dandrel, whom we have the great honor to welcome here today, was the first President of the Banque Alimentaire de Paris et d'Ile-de-France and of the Fédération Européenne des Banques Alimentaires. Bernard is a man of vision who established the founding basis not only of our Federation but also of the Food Banks from the Atlantic to the Urals. We owe him a great deal of gratitude not only because of his contribution to food banking in Europe but also for the trust he places in the new structure officially opened today.

Never will it be said how much is owed to the thousands of volunteers that have contributed over the years to the establishment of Food Banks in Europe and to the dozens of volunteers who have animated and contributed to the invaluable services rendered by the Fédération Européenne des Banques Alimentaires.

Our members overwhelmingly voted for the transfer of our headquarters from Bourg-La-Reine in the south of Paris to Brussels. A change in location is important but it is not everything. At the outset, our movement was animated by volunteers only and today, 88% of our collaborators still are volunteers. However, the evolution of



advocacy, the requirements of ever more professionalism in all our activities has rendered the appointment of professional staff not only desirable but indispensable for the survival of our federation. This evolution will allow us to tackle with renewed energy and resources the challenges ahead.

Good and safe surplus food is still far too common, the number of persons suffering from food in security is still far too large. We are contributing with passion to the reduction of both. Even if passion and dedication are indispensable, it is not enough to tackle one of the biggest scandals and paradox of our times. We estimate that within the 80 million tons of food products loss or wasted every year in Europe, we could recover a little more than 20 million tons. Today, with enormous efforts, we achieve 750,000 tons. Food Bankers want to contribute more to the health of our planet and of our people. We need an even more responsible attitude from the food supply chain. It is not enough to donate surplus food because it is a priority action in accordance with the food wastage hierarchy and because in many European countries it is becoming less expensive than to send it to the landfill. We are willing to establish and to reinforce more comprehensive and enhanced partnerships to achieve common goals and to work together: donating surplus food, developing joint projects and encouraging employees to volunteer with Food Banks. Furthermore, surplus food should be transported where it is needed. Borders and language differences inside Europe can no longer serve as an excuse to discard food donation. We must increase the capacity of food bankers to recover surplus food where available. This requires refrigerated trucks, well equipped storage space, expertise and competence, technology and people.

The existence of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) is a concrete presence of the European Union beside the most deprived: food and/or material assistance make feel a Europe which is close to its vulnerable citizens and willing to offer them a better future. Moreover, the FEAD is essential to complement quantitatively and qualitatively the food assistance classically offered by the charities affiliated to Food Banks and it has contributed over the years in moving 'food aid' to 'right to food'. The concept of right to adequate food in quantity and quality is an undisputable human right. It is so unequivocally linked to the promotion and preservation of health.

With your help, food bankers, members of the European Parliament and of the European Commission, representatives of the food supply chain and other NGOs, we will create a de facto solidarity among countries because Food Banks do not only feed people, they feed solidarity.

I am now very pleased to give the floor to his Excellency Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis who does not need introduction anymore as his dedication to the causes he defends is legendary. I invite him to give his keynote address after which the unveiling of the inaugurating plaque will take place and you are invited to share some good time with us.

Jacques Vandenschrik  
President of the European Food Banks Federation