

**36th World Scout Conference**  
**Thessaloniki, Greece,**  
**July 2002**  
**Speech by the new Chairwoman of the**  
**World Scout Committee**

Dear brother and sister Scouts,

It goes without saying that I am aware of the symbolic force of being not only the first Chairwoman of the World Scout Committee, but moreover the first African Chairwoman. In fact, I am perfectly conscious that this new development may surprise some of us, breaking as it does with tradition. Let us remember the world's shock and surprise at the election of a non-Italian pope ... and yet ... having said that, I hope that public opinion in general and Scout opinion in particular will consider this, above all, a sign that World Scouting is opening up in two key aspects.

Firstly, it is opening up to sharing responsibilities: electing a woman to lead the World Scout Committee is surely the most direct and significant application of strategic priority no. 3, which aims to promote equality and share responsibilities between women and men in the Movement.

It is also opening up with regard to geographic, cultural and ethnic representation. WOSM has now become a global movement and each of our 154 National Scout Organizations and each of our six Regions has the same rights and responsibilities. If we fail to accept this reality, our World Organization will not be able to function in a democratic way. Yet Scouting is defined as a school of democracy.

As Chairwoman of the World Scout Committee, I am responsible for ensuring that the Scout Movement is promoted throughout the world, as required by our constitution; for this I am counting on the firm and on-going support of my 13 fellow Committee colleagues, as well as on that of the six Regional Chairwoman and Chairmen who, as you know, participate in the World Committee meetings. Their views are of great value to us, as it is through them that the World Committee is able to keep its feet on the ground and remain tuned into the realities and needs of our members wherever they are on this planet.

However, beyond the symbolic value of opening up our Movement, the post which the World Committee has entrusted to me is primarily a question of competence. I intend to assume it fully, within the constitutional framework which is that of the World Committee within WOSM.

As I have already mentioned, my first duty - a moral rather than legal duty - is to maintain or rather reinforce the unity and harmony of the Movement, especially the fraternal links among all its members, with the frankness, honesty and humility which characterise the Scout spirit.

In this respect, I would like to reassure all of you who accord considerable importance to dialogue with WAGGGS. Whenever it is necessary to take action for the benefit of Scout and Guide youth, whilst respecting the fundamental choices which are specific to each of our world organizations, I will always be prepared to act in the spirit of the resolutions adopted by the WAGGGS Conference in Manilla and the WOSM Conference in Thessaloniki.

I also intend to ensure that the World Committee fulfils its functions flawlessly, namely:

- Ensuring that the decisions of the World Conference are faithfully implemented;
- Promoting our Movement in all countries, especially in those where Scouting does not yet exist or has not yet been recognised;
- Helping National Scout Organizations to fulfil our common mission;
- Carefully monitoring the work of the Sub-Committees of the World Committee, notably the Finance and Support, Educational Methods and Constitution Committees, as well as others which may be established to support the implementation of the Strategy.

I also intend to ensure that the World Committee assumes its constitutional responsibilities, that no-one else can exercise in its place, namely and I quote the constitution: "To supervise the management of the World Bureau and to approve its budget".

In this spirit, I have the firm intention to closely monitor the implementation of the proposals contained in the McKinsey Report, which the former Committee made its own, whether they be proposals on the management of the World Bureau by its Management Team, or on the functioning and organisation of the World Committee itself.

I intend to encourage the recent initiatives taken by the Bureau to improve the operational efficiency of the World Organization and its six Regions in serving the associations and the Movement. I note the spectacular increase in the number of young Scout leaders from different Regions of the world invited to come and contribute to the work of the World Bureau in Geneva on a temporary basis. I also note initiatives in the field, such as the international support team for the preparation of the 20<sup>th</sup> World Scout Jamboree. The path is arduous

with numerous obstacles and few means at our disposal. But we must persevere.

There are five years to go until the celebrations which will mark the Centenary of the Scout Movement.

I believe that we will also have to oversee the preparations of the Scout Centenary celebrations in 2007. The World Conference in Sousse in 2005 will mark a decisive stage in this process. The World Committee and World Bureau have to continue to bear their share of responsibility alongside the British Scouts to mobilise all the dynamic forces of the Movement around the world, in order to make sure that the slogan we have adopted, "One World, One Promise", does not ring hollow.

One of our priorities, which is also a constitutional function of the World Committee, will be to work with the World Scout Foundation to find other sources of funding than the current ones for our Organization. Our main motivation will, of course, be to implement the Strategy adopted during this Conference. This is a considerable challenge for all of us and in particular for the World Committee and the World Bureau whose means, as you know, are very limited.

Now that we have all agreed on our mission, our strategy, our priorities and our common interest in working together, it remains for us to strengthen our resources to fully attain our objectives.

Through and beyond these actions, I intend to promote a Scouting which is open to all, in which women, young people and people of all origins can fully exercise their choices in being a Scout. In this respect I cannot finish without emphasising partnership as defined in the Marrakech Charter. It is this solidarity which enables Scouting to flourish throughout every country without any distinction. May the strong always be willing to support the weak. This is enshrined in the Scout laws of all national associations.

I will do this in a spirit of service, striving at all times to think of others, as our promise teaches us, and bearing in mind that our only common *raison d'être* is the young people for whom Baden-Powell created Scouting.

Inevitably I will add a little African *joie de vivre*, patience and wisdom (but who could blame me!) ... and why not the energy of the lions of the Senegalese *Teranga*! Some people may say that I'll need a lot of this during the three years in front of me. I believe them, but I am willing to take on this task.

I am sure of one thing - that we will succeed in our task with God's help, in whose hands I place myself in exercising my new functions. I am of course ready to face these challenges and win the bets with the

help of everybody whose help I am counting on. In other words, with the help of all of you.

I would like to express my appreciation to the departing members of the World Committee for the moments of friendship and fraternity which we have shared and tell them that despite our sometimes diverging positions, we should remember the essential point: "A Scout is a friend to all and a brother to every other Scout".

To the new team, I simply say "Good luck".

Thank you for your attention. Long live the Scout fraternity!

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