

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **Noel Curran Speech, General Assembly Ireland, 29 June 2017**

I want to thank Jean Paul for his generous words. I very much look forward to working with him and with the rest of the ExBo.

I also want to thank Dee Forbes and RTE for hosting this event and putting the time and resources into it.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Ingrid's contribution over the last eight years.

She took over the EBU at a time of technological revolution and economic collapse and has steered it deftly through those turbulent waters, modernising the organisation and bringing it in new strategic directions along the way.

I wish her well with her future adventures.

I'm delighted and honoured to be the next Director General of the EBU.

Today is not the day for me to go into detail on future plans. I will do that when I start in the Autumn.

But I do want to say a few words to give you some sense of who I am and what my broad priorities will be.

In that regard I'm delighted that the General Assembly is being held in Dublin.

I think it's appropriate for lots of reasons, not just the coincidence of my own appointment.

Ireland is a country with a long and deep history of public service broadcasting.

It is also an international media market, with high mobile usage and, because it was so heavily cabled early, it has always attracted big international players like SKY and Liberty Global or UK broadcasters.

But Ireland is also a place that embodies what for me are the core values of what the EBU stands for.

It is a place where News and Current Affairs still matters - where there is still an appetite for quality journalism on all platforms.

It is a place where Radio still has a unique and quite personal connection with large sections of the population.

It is a place where music and arts are as much a part of the future as they are of the past.

It is a place that has embraced digital media but it is also a place where large audiences still gather communally to watch live Sport or big entertainment shows.

And that for me is what Public Service Media is about – our content.

Fifteen years ago, I would have described myself professionally as a ‘content person’. By that I would have meant that I was a journalist or later a producer, making programmes.

I would still describe myself as a content person - but being a content person now is much more complex for all of us.

Today it means understanding how to transform an organisation digitally to get the best content.

It’s about knowing the distribution chains and technology that allow content reach audiences.

Its about learning about personalising our content offerings so that we hold our audience’s attention and loyalty.

It’s about knowing how to compete with some of the biggest media companies in the world to secure the rights to some of our content and its about then exploiting commercial opportunities to fund that content.

And increasingly it’s about publicly defending your content offering against increasing political pressure or competitor’s complaints.

But it’s still about content for me. That’s what defines us, sets us apart and justifies our funding and its what I’ve always felt most passionate about.

I will bring that same passion to my new role. I hope I will also bring a direct understanding of what you do and the huge range of issues you all face every day.

Having worked as a Managing Director and Director General I know how complex it is for all of you to run a multi-media company today.

Having worked as a journalist, producer and Editor I have seen the quality of what is produced by the organisations in this room.

Having had a keen interest in European broadcasting policy since I studied it at undergraduate and postgraduate level in college, I know the importance of having a strong EBU input into future digital policy.

Having experienced economic turmoil in Ireland I know the kinds of financial and political pressures so many of you face while also trying to transform yourselves digitally.

I know what it’s like to have to chase every commercial cent to survive.

But I also know that what we do is important. I know the market doesn't always provide and what EBU members contribute to European culture, society and public discourse is unique and worth fighting for.

I have also learned along the way, the importance of listening as well as doing. I want to spend the coming months talking to members and to staff about what the EBU does and how we can do it better.

I firmly believe the EBU offers real value for members. But it is up to us to find new and concrete ways of showing members the value you receive.

It is also up to us to find new ways of adding to that value for members in terms of the range of content and services that you have access to. That will be a significant and immediate priority for me and the EBU team.

It will also be a cornerstone of a wide-ranging strategy, both inward and outward looking, that we will formulate with you next year.

I am not naïve about the challenges ahead - but I am optimistic about the future. I strongly believe that there is a future for the EBU and what our members do.

In 1987 I did my final year college thesis on the future of public service broadcasting.

At that time I could barely find a single international commentator who believed that the concept of public service broadcasting would survive the next twenty five years. Yet here we are.

At that time the main challenge was driven by deregulation. Today it is driven by technology.

But technology opens more doors than it closes.

The EBU is more important now than ever. We have a real opportunity now, with everything that's happening internationally, to leverage that importance.

Last night at the reception I spoke to so many people who are passionate about what we do. I found that same passion in so many of the staff I spoke to in Geneva two weeks ago.

It is my job to harness that passion, harness the ideas that accompany it and move the organisation forward.

It is a task that I will devote all my energy to in the years ahead. I look forward to working with you all.

Thank you.