

# We the Peoples|

**CLEMENT KALONGA**

*As prepared*

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We the Peoples – Global Leadership Awards 2024

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Honorable members of the United Nations and distinguished guests, it is an enormous privilege to be here today, representing the family of incredible individuals who comprise the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Network, otherwise known as UNDAC.

I am a proud member of UNDAC, a global rapid response team mechanism, managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), which provides rapid humanitarian assistance in support of affected states in sudden-onset emergencies.

We currently have around 600 UN staff and Member States, disaster management, and humanitarian experts in UNDAC, ready to deploy 24/7 wherever and whenever needed. Since its creation in 1993, UNDAC has deployed over three hundred times around the world, and we will continue to respond as part of the larger family of humanitarian aid workers who do not hesitate to leave their work, communities, and families in our shared mission to save lives and alleviate suffering in the aftermath of any disaster.

I was last deployed in December 2023 when floods and mudslides devastated the Hanang District of Northern Tanzania. Our collective efforts helped rescue 800 individuals to safety, a total of 9,400 affected people were provided shelter, food, water, and sanitation. At the time, as always, I hugged my family goodbye and went out to do my job. Deployment meant I missed a big event at my kids' school, and we had to move a family Christmas holiday plan. What I could not have foreseen is that it would be our last Christmas together as a family, as we tragically lost our son a few months ago. Personal sacrifice is common in this work but the impact we have as a team is what will continue to motivate me and other members of the network.

We are indebted to the UNOCHA for their unrelenting support to the UNDAC network and we would also like to recognize UNDAC's key supporters and donors, without whom, we would be unable to operate.

On behalf of the UNDAC network and UNOCHA, I extend our deepest gratitude to the United Nations Foundation and the Global Leadership Awards team for your recognition. But there is much yet to do. We must continue to strengthen our systems, to rise to meet new and increasing challenges, to deploy faster, and to work more effectively in the service of those affected by disasters and crises. They are and always must be at the centre of what we do. They are why we do what we do. They are the true first responders and we are truly privileged to serve them.

Thank you.

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