Speech by Fuzzy Bitar

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Hi everyone.

It is fantastic to be here with you.

And I have to say, standing here tonight feels particularly special.

For a couple of reasons.

First, because we are celebrating an incredible milestone and an incredible business.

And secondly, because the reality is that this is likely to be one of the last speeches I will give during my time at bp.

When you have spent almost four decades somewhere, moments like these make you pause and reflect.

They make you think about the people you have met, the experiences you have had, and the things you will remember long after you have left the building for the final time.

And when I look back, Air bp occupies a bigger place in that story than perhaps even I realised.

Mainly because I have spent the better part of the last forty years on an airplane.

In fact, I'm beginning to think I have personally contributed to half of your profits.

So—you are welcome.

But all those years of travel have taught me something.

Most of us board a plane without giving a second thought to what makes that journey possible.

We notice the seat.

We notice the food.

Sometimes we complain about the Wi-Fi.

What we don't see is the thousands of people behind the scenes making sure that aircraft can safely leave the ground.

That is what makes Air bp special, particularly to me.

It has connected me to colleagues, customers and friends all over the world.

It has allowed me to learn from people in every corner of our business.

And every time I stepped onto an aircraft, I was relying on people I didn’t see.

Nobody applauds when the fuel arrives exactly when it's supposed to.

Nobody writes headlines when operations run perfectly.

Nobody notices the thousands of things that go right every day.

And yet – that is because of you.

Your success is often invisible.

But your impact is enormous.

You have literally helped keep the world moving.

And not during the easy years.

During the difficult ones.

Global disruption.

Geopolitical conflict.

And during a pandemic that brought aviation, and much of the world, to a standstill.

I remember those days vividly.

Many industries had the luxury of waiting for clarity.

You didn't.

You had to figure things out in real time.

You had to adapt quickly.

And somehow, even in the most uncertain circumstances, you found a way.

Not because everything went according to plan.

But because people stepped forward when it mattered most.

And that is why I have always had such respect for this team.

Because I have seen it firsthand.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to visit your operations, including Cyprus and Athens.

What stood out was not just how well run they were, although they certainly were. It was the people behind them.

The pride in getting things right.

The commitment to safety.

The care shown for customers and for one another.

And people who understand that excellence is not something you achieve once.

It's something you choose every day.

Now, as I get closer to closing this chapter of my own career, people often ask me what I have learned.

The honest answer is that after nearly forty years, I've learned far more from other people than I've ever taught myself.

But there are a few lessons that have stayed with me.

The first is this.

Hold the line on what matters.

Aviation runs on precision.

It runs on trust.

And above all, it runs on safety.

The world will constantly change around you, and yes, this is true for where we are in bp today.

Strategies will change.

Structures will change.

Sometimes more often than any of us would like.

But certain things cannot change.

Safety.

Integrity.

The way we treat people.

When pressure rises, those are the moments that define us.

The second lesson is to speak your truth, even when it is inconvenient.

Particularly when it is inconvenient.

I have never met a great leader who only speaks when it is comfortable.

Trust is built through honesty.

Not perfect answers.

Not polished messages.

Honesty.

The third lesson is to build capability, not dependency.

One of the most important things a leader can do is create other leaders.

Your role is not to be the hero who solves every problem.

Your role is to help others grow.

To develop talent.

To create opportunities.

And to leave behind an organisation that is stronger because you were part of it.

The fourth lesson is simply to stay human.

Business can sometimes make us focus on metrics, targets, numbers and performance.

All important.

But behind every number is a person.

A colleague.

A team member.

A family.

Someone trying to do their best.

Never lose sight of that.

Some of the best leaders I've worked with weren't necessarily the smartest people in the room—like my Business Advisor.

They were the ones who listened.

The ones who cared.

The ones who made other people feel valued.

And finally, look after yourselves.

I think I probably did this one the best, right?

At least that's what I keep telling myself.

Now team, this work is not glamorous.

It is not often celebrated.

But it is absolutely essential.

The world depends on what you do.

Customers depend on what you do.

bp depends on what you do.

And I leave bp with enormous confidence.

Not because I know exactly what the future holds.

None of us do.

I leave with confidence because I know the calibre of the people in this room.

So tonight, celebrate.

Celebrate your achievements, your colleagues.

And take a moment to feel proud.

In the end, 100 years is not really a story about fuel.

It's a story about people.

The people who built this business.

The people who sustain it today.

And the people who will carry it into its next century.

Thank you for everything you do.

And thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your story.