

Joint Statement on the Annual Report on UNICEF's Humanitarian Action
Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board
11-14 June 2018
Check against delivery

Thank you, Mr. President.

I deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country, Austria.

We wish to thank Mr. Fontaine for his presentation.

We also thank UNICEF for its relentless efforts in providing a humanitarian response to those who need it most, and for delivering for millions of children. The indispensable and difficult work of UNICEF's staff and their partners in 337 humanitarian situations in 102 countries makes UNICEF a critical partner in humanitarian action and a key player in the humanitarian system.

We would like to start by making three points:

First, in light of the fact that in 2017 55% of UNICEF's country-level expenses were directed towards supporting emergency response, we welcome the opportunity to engage in a strategic discussion on UNICEF's humanitarian work at the annual session on the basis of the Annual Report; and reiterate our view that therefore accountability and transparency of expenditure is now more important than ever.

We commend UNICEF for its efforts to provide Member States with an analytical overview of the results achieved, challenges encountered, lessons learned and a forward-looking vision as a basis for future programming decisions.

We welcome UNICEF's remarks on the immense challenges encountered in ensuring humanitarian access to children and we appreciate that UNICEF plans to address these challenges in a systematic and structured way.

We commend UNICEF's focus on reaching "the most vulnerable" and we would be interested to learn more on how UNICEF targets these groups during humanitarian action. In this regard, we encourage UNICEF to continue addressing the needs and protecting the rights of vulnerable children, including children with disabilities.

We would also ask for additional information on results and challenges in the work on protection, and we emphasize the need to strengthen the protection of vulnerable groups, such as children and adolescents, in crisis and conflict.

Furthermore, the current and future issues of UNICEF's work presented in the report are all highly relevant and we are looking forward to an in-depth discussion on the organization's way forward. We commend UNICEF's efforts to develop new and innovative solutions.

The Annual Report will serve as a good basis for discussion. Beyond oversight, what we aim for is a continuous dialogue on humanitarian action – also in between the sessions of the Executive Board. In order to do that we encourage UNICEF to further reflect and enhance reporting, in particular on challenges, lessons learned, best practices, UNICEF's comparative advantage in humanitarian situations and forward-looking, strategic reflections.

Please allow a few exemplary suggestions in this regard:

- Whereas this first Annual Report on humanitarian action took a broad look at UNICEF's work, the next report could more explicitly address the specific reporting year in question and specify next steps for the year to come.
- In addition, we believe the report would gain significantly if different sections were more explicitly and logically linked to each other. For example, from a reported result flows an elaboration of how a specific challenge made reaching this result more difficult, followed by the corresponding lessons learned and concrete steps to address this very problem in the following year.
- Future Annual Reports could also include clearer references to lessons learned from the Synthesis Evaluation Report of Humanitarian Action 2010-2016.

Of course, we always stand ready for further dialogue on future reporting.

Second, we also seek to further exchange on the question of UNICEF's role in system-wide initiatives and in the broader humanitarian system, including UNICEF's World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain commitments. Could you please elaborate further on specific actions already taken – including information on its progress, good practice, innovation and challenges in meeting commitments to global humanitarian reform – and on the timeline for those actions yet to be implemented? Also, what are concrete actions that UNICEF takes to consistently and systematically progress its commitments to effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose humanitarian action with measurable field impact, including enhanced cooperation and coordination with other humanitarian actors. How does UNICEF ensure capacity building of local actors? We would also welcome further detail on UNICEF's cluster lead roles, and how UNICEF is showing leadership in these areas?

Third, we fully agree with the statement in the report that "humanitarian action is more effective when built upon established development programs, and life-saving actions for children and women in emergencies can sow the seeds of development". As a dual-mandated agency, we expect UNICEF to be a frontrunner in showcasing efforts to operationalize the nexus between humanitarian action and development programming to reduce vulnerability, build resilience, and promote rapid recovery and transition. This

entails, among other things, strong efforts to strengthen coherence, promote joint planning and programming while ensuring the respect of the humanitarian principles in UNICEF's humanitarian action, and to work on collective outcomes across the UN System and the humanitarian and development community, as agreed in the New Way of Working.

Finally, in order to make this exchange as interactive as possible, allow us, Mr. President, to direct a couple of specific questions to Mr. Fontaine on the report.

- *Concerning the section on Challenges:*

Where does the process led by the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programs to develop an institutional access framework for UNICEF stand? In what ways is UNICEF putting in place a concerted exchange of best practices with other humanitarian actors? How does UNICEF's new human resource strategy refer to crisis contexts and what changes derive from it?

- *Concerning the section on the Way Forward:*

We have taken note with interest of the UNHCR-UNICEF initiative on joint audits of shared partners as well as of the UNICEF-WFP agreement on harmonization of due diligence. Please elaborate on future plans to pursue this kind of opportunities.

Let me conclude by thanking UNICEF once again for their tireless efforts and please rest assured, Mr. President, that we will remain committed to supporting UNICEF.

Thank you.