

**FINAL**

**Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director**  
**First Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board**  
**Opening Remarks**  
**7 February 2012**

---

Good morning. As always, we have much ahead of us, both on our agenda and in the coming year.

I would like to focus today on innovation: why we believe it is critical to the strength of UNICEF, to the success of our equity strategy, and, most important, to achieving greater results for children.

Indeed, it extends to this meeting – as you will have happily noted. Our first innovation of the new year is to have scheduled this opening session on a Tuesday, as many of you requested. A major innovative breakthrough...

Last month, we welcomed not only the new year but also our new Bureau. At the swearing in ceremony, I thanked our outgoing President, Bureau, and Board members for their counsel and friendship. Now, the gavel has been passed, and once again, I congratulate our new President, Ambassador Ashe, as well as our new Vice Presidents: Ambassadors Kamau and Aitimova, Ms. Nina Nordstrom, and Ms. Karen Kaup. I greatly look forward to your leadership and our work together.

In the same spirit of new beginnings, I'd like to announce several key appointments to our senior staff.

First, I am delighted to introduce UNICEF's new Deputy Executive Director for External Affairs, Yoka Brandt. Yoka most recently served in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Director General for International Cooperation. She brings to UNICEF a deep commitment to children and 20 years of experience, in diplomacy, as Ambassador to Uganda and Eritrea; in international assistance; and in humanitarian emergency response – most notably as Chair of the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund. We are very fortunate to have her. Welcome, Yoka.

Today, we also are joined by a number of new Regional Directors.

Maria Calivis has stepped into her new role as Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

David Gressly, formerly UN Regional Coordinator for South Sudan, is now UNICEF's Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

Marie-Pierre Poirier, formerly UNICEF's Representative in Brazil, is now Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Karin Hulshof, currently our Representative in India, has been appointed Regional Director for South Asia and will begin her new role in April.

Karin will succeed Daniel Toole, who has been appointed Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific Region. Dan will cover both regions for the duration of our meeting, as Karin cannot be here.

Next, Richard Bridle has been appointed as Director, Division of Human Resources. Richard has had a rich, diverse and distinguished career at UNICEF, most recently serving as Representative in Cambodia, where he has helped pioneer our initiative to coach new managers, among many other accomplishments. His long field experience brings a fresh and very important perspective to our human resources management. Welcome, Richard.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Sally Fegan-Wyles, who stepped in to lead DHR following Christine Lloyd's departure last year. Her long experience, energy and commitment to UNICEF have made a real difference. Thank you, Sally.

Finally, Louis-Georges Arsenault, currently Director of UNICEF Emergency Operations, has been nominated as UNICEF Representative in India. From the earthquake in Haiti, to the flooding in Pakistan, to famine in the Horn of Africa, Louis-Georges has overseen EMOPS with high competence and commitment – qualities that should continue to serve UNICEF, and the children of India, very well. Thank you, Louis-Georges.

I can think of no one more qualified to succeed Louis-George than Ted Chaiban. Ted has served UNICEF in many key posts, and in some of the most challenging duty stations – most recently as Representative in Ethiopia, and previously in the Sudan. He brings tremendous perspective, experience, and strength to EMOPS at a critical time, and we are all very glad he is joining us in New York.

Please join me in congratulating all our new senior staff, and wishing them every success in their new roles.

UNICEF is indeed fortunate to have such a remarkable senior management team. And they must be, for these are remarkable, challenging times. They will demand much from all of us.

The continued financial crisis and rising food and fuel prices ... violence, conflict and humanitarian emergencies – all are taking a great toll, especially in the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable children and their families.

We see this most urgently in the Horn of Africa. Good rain and a coordinated global response have resulted in improvements in many areas, although the difficult operating environment in Somalia continues to hamper our efforts to reach all the children whose lives are still in jeopardy.

Two weeks ago, we extended our Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure for four more months for Somalia, which will receive priority for surge assignments and other resource allocations. And we will continue our substantial support to Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

We are proactively addressing new emergencies in the making, most notably in the Sahel region, where an estimated one million children face severe acute malnutrition. We will continue to respond to urgent needs, just as we will continue our work to build resilience in vulnerable communities.

Around the world, hundreds of millions of children are also at risk – of violence and abuse, of exploitation and neglect. Many disparities are widening. The effects of climate-related change are on the rise, endangering communities and ways of life.

A dire picture. But these are also times of real promise for the world's children – if we keep working together, and delivering as one to overcome the barriers and bottlenecks that prevent too many children from realizing their rights to survive, to thrive, and to reach their full potential.

We believe innovation can help accelerate our progress – across all of UNICEF.

Innovation in our programmes – using new technology and new ideas to reach the hardest to reach communities and the most vulnerable children, mothers, and families.

Innovation in our products – sparking the creation of new, lifesaving interventions ... supporting a more competitive market to help more countries afford them ... and strengthening the supply chain to meet greater demand.

Innovation in our processes – increasing our efficiency in a difficult economic environment ... improving our ability to target resources ... and better monitoring our results so we can better manage for results.

And innovation in our partnerships – working in ever-closer coordination with donor and partner governments ... with our sister UN agencies and our National Committees ... with civil society and the private sector ... and with young people themselves.

We are very glad that in 2011, some of our innovative work has been recognized. For example, UNICEF was selected by Devex as a Top Development Innovator, based on a poll of thousands of global development professionals. And the Digital Drum – a rugged, solar-powered computer kiosk designed by a UNICEF-led team for use by rural children and communities in Uganda – was named by Time Magazine as one of the best inventions of 2011.

The recognition was encouraging, but we need to do more –especially now, as continued economic uncertainty requires us to find new ways of doing more, potentially with less.

And it is especially important because it is a key to pushing ahead with our equity strategy, finding new ways to reach the hardest to reach communities.

So let me begin with our programmes – the front lines of our work.

2011 was, first and foremost, a year of implementation of our equity strategy. All our country offices have been working to identify bottlenecks to progress. And we are actively supporting this vital work at every level of our organization.

As we make the case for equity, we are also arguing for increased investments in people – and in child-focused policies – even as the economic environment forces many governments to take austerity measures. Such investment is critical to stability and sustainable growth. In this effort we are working closely with the World Bank and the IMF. Equitable investment for children in the social sector will be an important focus of our advocacy, as I noted at last week’s Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards.

Over the year, we have seen significant progress in several areas of our work and have identified areas where we must do more.

For example, water, sanitation and hygiene. Soon, WHO and UNICEF hope to share some good news about very positive advances in increasing sustainable access to clean water. But we are also increasingly focused on stepping up our efforts in sanitation, where we must do much more.

And we have reached an important milestone in recent days in the global effort to defeat one of the world’s great scourges, polio. In January, India announced that it had interrupted polio transmission for one year – a tremendous achievement by the Indian government, which focused its national campaign on the poorest and hardest to reach places. Now, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative – and all of us – must finish the job and defeat this evil disease once and for all.

Innovation has been vital in the fight against polio – from the development of vaccines ... to the strategy of national campaigns ... to outreach efforts that build demand. Just as in all our efforts, it can help us work faster and reach farther into the most remote and disadvantaged communities.

Indeed, innovation well may be to equity what social mobilization was to the child survival revolution of the 1980s and 1990s. Or, as Bill Gates recently said, “innovation is the means, equity is the goal.”

Consider the global effort to achieve an AIDS-free generation. We know that early administration of anti-retrovirals to HIV-infected pregnant mothers and their infants can virtually eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV. The challenge is how to identify, test and provide medicines to pregnant women and babies in a timely and effective manner. For those children who are infected with HIV, it is critical that they be diagnosed and treated with antiretrovirals immediately.

This is a race against time, as an estimated 30% of HIV-infected infants will die within one year of age and 50% within two years of age without treatment.

Though we know how to diagnose and treat children for HIV, diagnosis is still a lengthy and painstaking process. In one community in Zambia it took 66 days for an infant’s blood sample to travel to the lab for testing and for the results to be returned to the health worker. 66 days, when every day counts.

Innovation can help overcome these barriers. For example, Project Mwana, a pilot project supported by UNICEF with our local partners in Zambia, and a similar project in Malawi, use Rapid SMS to speed up the process of early infant diagnosis. By sending test

results directly to health workers in community clinics on their mobile phones, precious time can be saved – and precious lives.

And the same technology helps remind women in remote locations of upcoming appointments – improving their access to ongoing care. Since we piloted the program, it is delivering 30 per cent more results, with a 50 per cent decrease in turn-around time.

We hope to take Project Mwana to scale in both countries very soon. And we are continuing to develop innovative ways to provide HIV-positive pregnant women and babies with antiretroviral treatment as soon as possible – and as close as possible to where they live.

Or consider child protection. Every year, thousands of children become separated from their families during conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies. Separation greatly heightens the risk of harm to these children, but aid workers have few tools to reunite them with their parents. Most still copy information by hand with carbon paper, type it into an old-fashioned database, and then try to transmit this data across vast regions.

Rapid Family Tracing and Reunification – or RapidFTR – uses mobile devices and netbooks to help case-workers collect, edit, update, search for, and share information in real time. Its design is the product of a remarkable collaboration among academia, the private sector, and young people – a graduate class conducted at New York University called “Design for UNICEF.”

RapidFTR is currently undergoing field trials in Uganda by UNICEF, UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Save the Children. By the end of this year, we hope it will be deployed worldwide – and who knows how many young lives it may affect?

Few things affect children’s lives – and futures – more than education. We have made tremendous progress in expanding access to primary education. But far too many barriers remain. Innovation can help break them down.

Consider just one: using a venture capital model to help countries buy textbooks and in doing so, improve the quality of education.

In 2010 in Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF and the international donor community, launched the Education Transition Fund. This innovative multi-donor funding mechanism is helping bridge the funding gap as Zimbabwe makes the transition from emergency to recovery. It has already resulted in the purchase and distribution of 15 million core subject textbooks, with 7 million more to come. And our country office used Rapid SMS to track the delivery of those books to communities across the country, better connecting supply and demand.

Innovation is also transforming our work in emergencies. For example, UNICEF is using cash transfers to fight malnutrition among children in Niger. By providing additional resources to vulnerable families, we can protect emergency food rations intended for their children. The approach is being replicated in other countries in the Sahel.

We also are using SMS technology more systematically, both to assess humanitarian needs and to monitor results in the field, as we recently did during the flooding in Pakistan.

And this year we are exploring how SMS can help us better engage with communities, and help communities hold us more accountable.

These are just a few of the ways we are using innovation to drive progress in our programmes. It is also key to strengthening our products: the life-saving treatments and critical supplies UNICEF procures on behalf of our partners and our efforts to build a healthy, competitive market.

Over the last year, UNICEF has helped introduce a number of promising new products. These include Dispersible Amoxicillin Tablets, which are easily dissolved in water to make them easier for children to swallow ... Flavored Oral Rehydration Salts, which are more palatable to children ... a redesigned Jerry Can that makes it easier to transport water in emergency situations ... and an improved Respiratory Rate Timer to diagnose pneumonia, one of the biggest killers of children.

UNICEF is also working with partners like the GAVI Alliance and the Gates Foundation to build a stronger, more competitive, and more transparent market. For example, in 2011, with the support of our partners, we published for the first time the prices we pay individual companies for vaccinations – a step we hope will help bring down those prices and boost competition. And our collective work to shape the market already has achieved substantial price reductions on products such as bed nets, RUTF, and vaccines against polio, Hib, and rotavirus.

I am very pleased to tell you that such innovative approaches should yield some \$735 million in cost savings by governments, partners and UNICEF between 2011 and 2015.

Innovation truly is the engine of our Supply Division, and we are committed to building on our work in this area, both within UNICEF and with our partners. For example, we are very excited to serve with UNFPA as Vice Chairs of the Secretary-General's new Commission on Commodities for Women's and Children's Health. The Commission is designed to focus greater attention on "overlooked" commodities – treatments like Oral Rehydration Salts, zinc, and antibiotics, which combat diarrhea and pneumonia, the biggest killers of children.

It will bring together governments, foundations, the private sector and UN agencies to find new ways of boosting the market for these truly lifesaving commodities – from raising awareness of their importance, to raising production quality ... in effect, building both supply and demand.

Innovation is also a key to making our processes more agile and responsive. 2011 was a very challenging year on this front, with budget cuts at headquarters and a number of procedural innovations. But the challenges are being met and will pay dividends. Let me begin with VISION.

In January, VISION went live. It is now up and running across UNICEF, even as we continue to fine tune the system. This process has engaged our entire organization, but most particularly Martin Mogwanja, Eimar Barr, and the VISION team – more than 100 people who have dedicated hundreds of hours to put the system in place and train more than 7,000 staff across UNICEF as we prepared for the transition.

The hard work has paid off. For the first time, all our offices are operating on the same platform for conducting transactions and managing resources ... managers are able to see specific details of how other offices and programmes are performing ... and our entire organization will now be able to act faster, report more transparently to governments and donors, and better identify opportunities to act for children.

VISION was also designed to produce the information that will bring us into compliance with IPSAS, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards. And I am pleased to report that effective January 1, UNICEF has adopted IPSAS for our financial reporting, on our way to full compliance, as the Board has urged.

Another real improvement in our processes – and in our commitment to transparency: we now provide Board Members with remote access to our internal audit reports from anywhere in the world.

UNICEF also will be joining the World Bank, DFID, the African Development Bank, the European Commission, and others, in the International Aid Transparency Initiative, or IATI. By creating common standards for sharing information about aid flows, IATI should make that information much more accessible to the public.

Our Human Resources Division has also been working hard to streamline our processes. For example, we have been exploring innovative ways to cut down on recruiting time. Since 2008, we have cut down the average time to fill a vacant post by 26% -- from 137 to 101 days. But that it is still far too long. DHR is now beginning to advertise generic job descriptions to create a Talent Group of pre-screened, qualified candidates from which hiring units can select when a post opens. We are beginning to pilot this new process in the health and water and sanitation sectors.

And DHR has been working in close coordination with our Emergency Management Operations to improve our ability to respond. I earlier mentioned UNICEF's new Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure, on which I briefed the Board last year.

The CEAP already has improved our ability to respond quickly in the Horn, in part through our new Immediate Response Teams, or IRTs. Each IRT is composed of highly experienced, pre-cleared staff, who can deploy within 48 hours, without time-consuming approval and requisition processes. We believe it can provide a model for broader UN emergency response.

Another process in which we have made significant progress over the past year is in Research – so critical to all our work. Last year, I announced the consolidation of our new Office of Research, and broadened its mandate to encompass Knowledge Management. For the first time, these key functions are integrated.

This improves our ability to share the latest research on children directly with the field. It also helps the field guide our researchers to the areas where we are in greatest need of data... and evidence of what works.

Perhaps the most exciting innovation in our processes –and one which will command significant focus this year – is our new monitoring framework, which we are calling the Monitoring Results for Equity System or MoRES ... Or as I still like to call it, the Cup. As

we roll it out this year, it should make a great difference in allowing us to monitor better for results, so we can manage better for results – especially in the most disadvantaged areas.

I want to thank the Board for its encouragement when I briefed you on this at our last several meetings. I was glad to have the opportunity to share this innovation at last week's Joint Meeting of the Boards, emphasizing that since it will be measuring our collective results in overcoming bottlenecks, we hope it will be used collectively.

We have had very encouraging bilateral discussions with many partner governments, NGOs, and members of the UN Development Group about the best way to use this new tool together. And all of our country offices will be discussing how to achieve the broadest use possible of MoRES in the coming months.

This brings me to the fourth area where innovation can help us become more effective: our partnerships. For we cannot achieve any of our goals without them.

MoRES can be one of the important ways we support the priorities and programmes of our partner governments. And, in our partnerships with our sister UN agencies, it can strengthen our ability to Deliver As One. If agencies working in each area monitor more closely their collective results, it will encourage them to plan and act in closer collaboration – deepening the focus of Deliver as One where it should be: on results.

Innovation in ICT – information and communications technology – can help us do exactly that. For example, VISION links UNICEF country office programming to UNDAFs and national development plans, enabling us to see where they align ... and where they don't, to take corrective action, as necessary.

Another example is Global Pulse, an initiative of the Secretary-General designed to improve how we use data to detect the early signs of stress on vulnerable populations, and to track the impact of crises in real time.

For example, local communities are already using SMS texting to do things like share the price of food staples, or alert one another to outbreaks of disease. Global Pulse Labs will track and analyse such data – which is provided in an anonymous form, by private sector service providers, who have programmed the system to search for key words. Spikes in those key words – for example, cholera – could show trends, enabling government, the UN and other partners to respond more quickly and effectively.

Even as we work to strengthen our partnerships within the UN, we are also committed to building on another indispensable partnership – with our National Committees, always such a rich source of innovation.

Every year, National Committees mobilize one third of our resources through donations, leveraging the enormous generosity of millions of individual supporters around the world. But National Committees do much more than raise funds and awareness; they also build bridges to the private sector, harnessing the exceptional ability of companies to spur innovation and finding new ways to share that knowledge with communities in need.

One example is ING, a global financial services company and one of UNICEF's strongest partners. ING's support goes beyond its generous financial contributions; it also

engages its employees in our shared work for children. For instance, its Corporate Volunteer Program has linked its employees in India with school headmasters to improve India's education system. Together they developed a training manual, which already has been used to train more than 400 headmasters and school directors in management skills.

Similarly, UPS, one of the world's largest package delivery companies, has made generous donations of air cargo space to help us move urgently needed supplies to the Horn of Africa. It is also sharing its expertise, supporting emergency preparedness and response training and advising on ways to improve our supply chain.

Another area rich with possibility for innovation is public-private partnership. I have already mentioned two of the most successful: GAVI and GPEI. Let me emphasize a third: the Scaling Up Nutrition, or SUN, movement.

SUN was created to drive global awareness and action on an issue that has been overlooked for far too long: under-nutrition and the stunting it can cause. More than 180 million children around the world are stunted, a condition which permanently affects their cognitive capacities – a tragedy for those children, and a threat to the development of their countries.

I am honoured that the Secretary General has asked me to chair the Lead Group of the SUN Movement, working closely with his Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition, David Nabarro. We will work to build on the enormous progress SUN has already made to draw global attention to this silent emergency – and, more broadly, to the impact of the global food crisis on food and nutrition security. And we will continue to advocate for greater investment in the highly cost-effective methods to combat stunting.

As we do, we will be sure to preserve the heart of SUN: it is a movement. A movement that has brought together the World Bank, NGOs, UN agencies, the private sector, and, of course, a growing number of governments which are committed to taking action by becoming “Early Risers.”

In all these areas – our programmes, our products, our processes, and our partnerships – we are harnessing innovation. And there are many areas where we can and must do more.

I'd like briefly to note just two: using information and communications technology to strengthen South-South, or horizontal, co-operation, and engaging young people more in the process of changing their own lives.

We are already seeing the benefits of horizontal cooperation in areas that cut across borders – from preventing the spread of disease, to addressing the effects of climate change, to increasing child protection.

Information and communications technology can help UNICEF foster such cooperation, from conducting country-to-country webinars and video conferences on issues of mutual concern ... to building and supporting online communities for discussion, development and delivery of promising innovations.

For example, much of the collaboration that led to the Digital Drum was virtual, linking South African technologists with Ugandan graduate students, developers in New

York, top universities and people on the ground in the Solomon Islands and Suriname. In the process, it has inspired a great deal of thinking about access to information in rural contexts.

Like the Digital Drum, some of the most promising innovations today are being developed with input from young people, whose lives they actually affect. We should do more to encourage this, by giving them the tools to improve their own communities.

Let me offer just two examples.

Last November in Rio de Janeiro, I stood on a hill in a favela watching a student fly a kite with a camera attached to it. He and his friends were actually mapping the risks in their neighbourhood – areas prone to floods, violence and drug selling. They not only share the data they collect with local leaders – they offer ideas for how to address the risks they are mapping. They are changing their world ... and thus, the world.

Engaging young people may be especially important when it comes to adapting to – and preparing for – the effects of climate change.

Consider the story of Arnel Alipao, an 18-year old from the Philippines. Arnel survived the recent floods that engulfed his region. He saw first-hand the destruction that occurs when communities are unprepared. He was angry – but he resolved to do something about it. Today, he is a global advocate for disaster risk reduction, sharing his experience and ideas not only with his peers, but also with government agencies and development organizations.

Many of the initiatives I have described today are already being used or piloted in the field. The challenge now is how to take the most promising ones to scale – and how to spur new innovation.

We believe that one of the richest areas for exploration is the "demand side," as we develop new ways of sharing knowledge with families and communities. New technology is increasing their ability to put knowledge to use in their own lives ... to allow them to tell us, in real time, what issues are most pressing ... and ultimately, to hold us more accountable for results.

In sum, we are encouraged by all of this. By the progress we are making. By the innovation that is fueling so much of it. By our new leadership team. By the support of this Board. And by our new President, who is as focused on results as anyone in this room.

But to achieve the full promise of the moment, we must have the flexible funding that makes all our work possible. So at the risk of being predictable, let me conclude with a review of where we stand financially, and, again, emphasize the importance of regular resources.

A year ago, I reported that our regular resource income had declined for the third year in a row in 2010, and I asked all member states to help us reverse that trend.

Today, I am very pleased and grateful to report that our preliminary numbers for 2011 indicate an 11% increase in core resources revenue. This growth is due partly to exchange

rate gains during most of 2011. But it is, still more, a reflection of the generosity of our donors, and we are deeply grateful.

However, despite the growth, our RR income in 2011 remains lower than our expenditures, as we have anticipated, causing a deficit of about \$60 million. This deficit reflects in part a strategy to draw down on surplus that was generated during years of high growth. We did so to maintain a high level of programme expenditure.

As our regular resource cash balance nears the three-month working capital threshold, it is clear that we need to further curb our expenses, building on the cost-saving measures we began last year.

But we must also increase our income. We cannot do that alone. So once again, I appeal to all member states to increase their regular resource contributions to sustain current country programme levels.

So much depends on this. The results we are committed to achieving in the lives of children. The promise of equity, expanding the number of the lives we can touch. And realizing the potential of all those children to shape the future. Their future.

So much depends on this – and so we are depending on all of you, as we always do: for your advice, for your guidance, and for the support that makes everything we do possible. Thank you.

###