

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

The UNICEF Executive Board

An Informal Guide

2012

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The UNICEF Executive Board: An Informal Guide – 2012

UNICEF	3
The Executive Board.....	3
Functions of the Executive Board.....	4
The Bureau	5
Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board	5
Executive Board sessions.....	5
Annual organization of work	6
First regular session.....	6
Annual session.....	6
Second regular session	7
Joint meetings with the Executive Boards of other United Nations funds and programmes.....	7
Intersessional meetings.....	8
Conduct of sessions.....	8
Decision-making	9
Participation of observers	10
Informal discussions	10
Field visits.....	10
Documentation	10
Logistics of the sessions.....	12
Credentials.....	12
Documentation Booth	12
United Nations grounds passes.....	12
General information and schedules	12

UNICEF

1. The United Nations General Assembly established UNICEF on 11 December 1946 as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, to be utilized and administered “for child health purposes generally”, especially for children and adolescents in countries devastated by the Second World War.¹ On 1 December 1950, the General Assembly expanded the limited mandate of UNICEF to meet “emergency and long-range needs of children and their continuing needs particularly in under-developed countries”.² On 6 October 1953, the Assembly, considering the role the Fund played “for the protection of the child” and in creating “favourable conditions for the development of the long-range economic and social programmes of the United Nations and the specialized agencies”, decided to continue the Fund on permanent basis and to change the name of the organization to the United Nations Children’s Fund while retaining the acronym UNICEF.³
2. In the six decades since its founding, UNICEF has progressively expanded its work around the world, and currently has programmes of cooperation with the Governments of some 157 countries and territories, with a staff of over 10,000 worldwide, most of them based in field offices.
3. The Fund operates on the basis of voluntary contributions from Governments and donations from the private sector, including the 36 National Committees for UNICEF, as well as the sale of greeting cards and gifts or other private-sector fundraising activities.
4. UNICEF is administered by the Executive Director under policies, including the determination of programmes and allocation of funds, established by the Executive Board in accordance with such principles as may be laid down by the Economic and Social Council. In 1996, the Executive Board adopted the UNICEF Mission Statement.⁴ The current work of UNICEF is guided by the recently extended medium-term strategic plan for the period 2006 to 2013.⁵

The Executive Board

5. The General Assembly established the Executive Board as the governing body of UNICEF when it created the Fund in 1946. UNICEF annually reports through the Executive Board to the Economic and Social Council, which in turn reports to the General Assembly. The Fund’s work is reviewed annually by the Assembly as part of its larger debate on operational activities for development.⁶

¹ UNICEF was established by General Assembly resolution 57 (I) of 11 December 1946, continuing the work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, then being phased out.

² The initial mandate of UNICEF was extended for three years in General Assembly resolution 417 (V) of 1 December 1950.

³ The General Assembly established UNICEF as the United Nations Children’s Fund in resolution 802 (VIII) of 6 October 1953, along the lines of its previous resolutions, “with the exception of any reference to time limits”.

⁴ See Executive Board decision 1996/1 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1).

⁵ On the current MTSP for 2006-2013, see Executive Board decisions 2005/18, 2008/14 and 2009/5.

⁶ In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and 50/227 of 24 May 1996 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. See also the more

6. UNICEF financial reports and accounts and the report of the Board of Auditors are submitted annually to the General Assembly, reviewed by its Fifth Committee and by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Advisory Committee also reviews the UNICEF biennial support budget and other related reports as appropriate.

7. Since 1994, the Executive Board has been operating in its current structure, comprising 36 members, elected to three-year terms by the Economic and Social Council, with the following regional allocation of seats: 8 African States, 7 Asian States, 4 Eastern European States, 5 Latin American and Caribbean States and 12 Western European and other States (including Japan).⁷

8. The Executive Board's annual term is identical to a calendar year and runs from 1 January to 31 December. Each year, the Economic and Social Council elects members to the Board from among the United Nations Member States or States Members of the specialized agencies.⁸ To ensure continuity of experience, only a certain number of new members are elected in any given year. Usually, each member serves a three-year term.⁹ The Western European and Others group has established a rotation schedule for its members under which some States do not serve a full three-year term.¹⁰

Functions of the Executive Board

9. The Executive Board is responsible for providing intergovernmental support to, and supervision of, the activities of UNICEF in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the Assembly and the Council, in accordance with its respective responsibility as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, and for ensuring that UNICEF is responsive to the needs and priorities of recipient countries. The Executive Board of UNICEF is thus subject to the authority of the Economic and Social Council and has the following functions:

- (a) Implement the policies formulated by the Assembly and the coordination and guidance received from the Council;
- (b) Receive information from the Executive Director and provide guidance on the work of UNICEF;
- (c) Ensure that the activities and operational strategies of UNICEF are consistent with the overall policy guidance set forth by the Assembly and the Council, in accordance with their respective responsibility as set out in the Charter;

recent General Assembly resolutions 62/207 of 19 December 2007 and 63/232 of 19 December 2008, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 2009/214 and 215 of 22 July 2009.

⁷ On the governing bodies of the development funds and programmes, see in particular paragraphs 21 to 29 of General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993.

⁸ These elections are held during a resumed organizational session of the Economic and Social Council, held usually in May or June of each year.

⁹ For the composition of the Executive Board since 1946, see Annex 2 of this document.

¹⁰ The curator of the rotation scheme is currently Switzerland. The United States of America does not participate in the rotation scheme.

- (d) Monitor the performance of UNICEF;
- (e) Approve programmes, including country programmes, as appropriate;
- (f) Decide on administrative and financial plans and budgets;
- (g) Recommend new initiatives to the Council and, through the Council, to the Assembly, as necessary;
- (h) Encourage and examine new programme initiatives;
- (i) Submit annual reports to the Council at its substantive session; these could include recommendations, where appropriate, for improvement of field-level coordination.¹¹

The Bureau

10. The officers of the Executive Board constitute the Bureau, and are elected by the Executive Board at its first regular session of each year from among the members for that year.¹² The five officers – the President and four Vice-Presidents – represent the five regional groups, with the presidency rotating among groups every year. As a matter of custom, permanent members of the Security Council do not serve as officers of the Board.¹³

11. The Bureau serves as a bridge between the UNICEF secretariat and the regional groups, dealing primarily with liaison, administrative and functional matters to enhance the effectiveness of the Executive Board. Members of the Bureau normally coordinate informal consultations within their respective regional groups. The Bureau normally meets monthly and as necessary during the sessions.

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

12. The Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board (OSEB) is responsible for maintaining effective relationships between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board. In consultation with the President and other members of the Bureau, it organizes the business of the Executive Board and services all its sessions. OSEB also provides editorial and technical services for all documentation submitted to the Executive Board or resulting from its meetings. It has similar responsibilities in relation to informal consultations and briefings and Bureau meetings.

Executive Board sessions

13. The Executive Board holds an annual session, usually in May or June, as well as

¹¹ See General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993, paras. 20-22.

¹² Prior to 1994, the officers of the Executive Board formed a Governing Council headed by a Chairman and four Vice-Chairmen. See Annex 3 for a listing of the officers of the Executive Board since 1946.

¹³ See also the Rules of Procedure (E/ICEF/177/Rev.6), in particular rules 11, 12 and 13 for details concerning their election and term of office.

two regular sessions, the first generally in January or February and the second in September of each year. The sessions are held at United Nations Headquarters, although the Executive Board may accept invitations to meet elsewhere.¹⁴

14. The Executive Board maintains a general outline of the division of labour between annual and regular sessions, although it retains the flexibility to discuss topics as required at any given session. The number of regular sessions is dictated by the workload of the Executive Board in a given year.¹⁵

Annual organization of work

15. The Executive Board approves its annual programme of work at the last session of the preceding year. The programme of work is subject to change, as the Board also approves the specific agenda for each session at the start of that session. At all sessions, the Executive Director, as required, reports to the Executive Board on the relevant issues on the agenda.¹⁶

First regular session

16. The first regular session usually focuses on the following agenda items:

- (a) Annual report to the Economic and Social Council;¹⁷
- (b) Annual workplan and proposed budget for fundraising by the Private Fundraising and Partnerships division;
- (c) Audited financial statements and report of the Board of Auditors;¹⁸
- (d) Pledging event;¹⁹
- (e) Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF;
- (f) Approval of any revised country programme documents discussed at the previous session.²⁰

Annual session

17. The annual session usually focuses on major policy and programme issues,

¹⁴ In such cases, under the terms set by General Assembly resolution 31/140 of 17 December 1976, the host Government will defray the additional cost to UNICEF of holding the session away from Headquarters.

¹⁵ See the addendum to Executive Board decision 1994/R.1/2 (E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1).

¹⁶ See rule 17.3 of the Rules of Procedure (E/ICEF/177/Rev.6).

¹⁷ As mandated by resolution 48/162, UNICEF is required to submit an annual report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session on its programme and activities, including a section following a common structure used by the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA and WFP, on the basis of specific areas designated by the Council or the Assembly. This report is submitted to the Council together with a summary of the Executive Board's comments and recommendations on the report.

¹⁸ The audited financial statements and report of the Board of Auditors are discussed every second year.

¹⁹ See Executive Board decision 1999/8 (E/ICEF/1999/7/Rev.1).

²⁰ In accordance with Executive Board decisions 2002/4 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1) and 2006/19 (E/ICEF/2006/5/Rev.1).

progress reports and other issues that have broad interest:

- (a) Annual report of the Executive Director: progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan;²¹
- (b) Draft country programme documents;
- (c) Field visits undertaken by Executive Board members;²²
- (d) Annual report on UNICEF internal audit activities;
- (e) Annual report on the evaluation function and major evaluations in UNICEF.

Second regular session

18. The second regular session usually concentrates on the following agenda items:

- (a) UNICEF financial plan;²³
- (b) Biennial support budget (every second year);
- (c) UNICEF financial reports and statements, including the report to the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;
- (d) Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial reports and statements;
- (e) Regional summaries of midterm reviews of country programmes;
- (f) Adoption of revised country programme documents presented at the annual session;
- (g) Programme of work for the following year.

Joint meetings with the Executive Boards of other United Nations funds and programmes

19. In keeping with recent practice, the UNICEF Executive Board sessions are usually held immediately before or after the corresponding sessions of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

20. Joint meetings with the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA have been held annually since 1998, to facilitate greater integration of governance oversight and to review issues and matters of common concern. Since 2000, the Bureau of the Executive

²¹ See Executive Board decision 2001/22 (E/ICEF/2001/6).

²² If a field visit takes place later in the year, it is discussed at the following session.

²³ The exception is when the full MTSP is being considered, usually every fourth year.

Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) has been participating in these joint meetings.²⁴ Starting in 2011, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) is also participating in these joint meetings.

21. The agendas for the joint meetings, which are usually held around the time of the first regular session at the beginning of the year, are agreed upon by the secretariats of the funds and programmes, in consultation with the members of the Executive Boards through their respective Bureaux.

22. The meetings focus on overarching themes of relevance to all four agencies, such as the transition from relief to development; HIV and AIDS; harmonization of budgets; and staff safety and security; disaster risk reduction; ‘delivering as one’; progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals; food prices and nutrition security; and gender mainstreaming.

Intersessional meetings

23. Intersessional meetings or informal briefing and consultations are held periodically during the year to discuss issues of particular interest to members or to provide additional information about subjects to be discussed at upcoming sessions. These meetings are held at United Nations Headquarters with full interpretation services and are announced in the *Journal of the United Nations* (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/journal.asp>).

24. As a rule, a pre-session information meeting is organized before each session of the Executive Board.²⁵ At these procedural meetings, delegations have the opportunity to comment on the provisional agenda for the session or to raise with the secretariat questions about any of the agenda items.

25. Prior to each session, the secretariat normally organizes briefings on specific agenda items for each of the regional groups. Delegations are advised individually by the secretariat of the date and time of these meetings, which are held either in one of the smaller conference rooms at United Nations Headquarters or, if these are unavailable, at UNICEF House.

Conduct of sessions

26. The Executive Board President presides over each session, and opens with introductory statements by the President and the Executive Director and the adoption of the agenda.²⁶

27. All session meetings are supported by interpretation in the six official languages

²⁴ These joint meetings follow a recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General. See his 1997 report, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform* (A/51/950), in particular paragraph 162.

²⁵ This is in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993.

²⁶ In the absence of the President, one of the Vice-Presidents presides over the proceedings.

of the United Nations.²⁷

28. The provisional agenda, organization of work and timetable for each session are prepared by OSEB, in consultation with the Bureau. Delegations have an opportunity to comment on the provisional agenda at the pre-session information meeting, held before each session, and at the opening of the session itself.

29. Agenda items may be considered separately or in clusters. Each item on the agenda is introduced by the appropriate member of the secretariat and discussed by the Board. The Executive Director and other members of the secretariat respond to the statements made and issues raised by delegations at intervals during the debate of each agenda item. The Board may take a decision on the item in question or, if it is presented for information, take note of it.

30. The effective use of time in deliberations is important. Debate is confined to the question before the Executive Board and the President may call a speaker to order if his or her remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion. The Board may limit the number of times the representative of each member may speak on any question. To make the best use of the time available, if the Board concludes its consideration of an agenda item ahead of schedule, it immediately moves on to the next agenda item.

Decision-making

31. The Executive Board takes all of its decisions by consensus. The decisions are to be short, in principle without a preamble, and should address the specific issue under consideration. To facilitate the decision-making process, the secretariat, in preparing documentation for consideration by the Executive Board, is mandated to include the text of a draft decision if action by the Board is required in that area.²⁸

32. In addition, delegations may submit additional proposals on issues that reflect developments emerging from the debate, on issues covered in the documentation and on other subjects.

33. Each draft proposal must be formally introduced by its sponsor, an Executive Board member, during plenary meetings. Deadlines for the submission of written draft proposals may be announced to ensure sufficient time for translation and negotiation. Under normal circumstances, delegations should have at least 24 hours to examine proposals before decisions are taken.

34. The Executive Board President may send draft proposals to open-ended drafting sessions usually coordinated by one of the Vice-Presidents. Time constraints have made it necessary to schedule drafting sessions in parallel with plenary meetings. Delegations generally hold informal consultations among themselves and reach consensus on draft decisions. Once agreed upon, final drafts are referred to the formal plenary session for

²⁷ Interpretation is not guaranteed for informal consultations or meetings, as these services depend upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

²⁸ See Executive Board decision 1994/R.1/1 (E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1).

action.

Participation of observers

35. Right of participation as an observer in the deliberations of the Executive Board meetings, without the right to vote, is reserved to a Member State when its country programme is under consideration.

36. The Board also may invite States and participants who manifest a special interest in the item or items under consideration to participate in the deliberations without the right to vote.²⁹

Informal discussions

37. The Executive Board sometimes chooses to hold informal discussions during its formal sessions. These discussions allow delegations and the secretariat to address issues without requiring that a formal document be prepared or to have a dialogue without the limits of an official debate. The discussions have focused on programmatic issues (UNICEF HIV/AIDS prevention activities) and procedural questions (working methods of the Executive Board and terms of reference for its field visits).

Field visits

38. Executive Board members have been taking part in organized field visits to a UNICEF country programme since 1993. In 2004, the Executive Board adopted a set of revised guidelines for these field visits. Under these guidelines, there are three visits per year: one by the members of the Bureau; one by members of the Board; and one joint visit with members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP.³⁰

39. The countries to be visited each year are selected by the Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat and, in the case of a joint visit, with the Bureaux and secretariats of the other agencies. The President may also make field visits or undertake other official travel as necessary.³¹

Documentation

40. The UNICEF secretariat submits all documentation to the Executive Board through OSEB, which provides editorial and technical services not only for Executive Board session documents but also for those resulting from Board meetings. The Office works closely with the United Nations Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), which is responsible for the translation, publication and distribution of all official documents.

41. All documents are translated into the six official languages of the United Nations,

²⁹ See rules 50 and 51 and the annex to the Rules of Procedure.

³⁰ See Executive Board decision 2004/13 and document E/ICEF/2004/19.

³¹ See Annex 4 for a list of the programme countries visited by members of the UNICEF Executive Board since 1993.

with the exception of conference room papers (CRPs) and country programme documents (CPDs), which are available in English, French and Spanish only, and possibly another of the official languages, if requested by a country whose programme is under discussion. In keeping with United Nations guidelines, documents must not exceed 16 pages, unless an exemption has been granted by DGACM.

42. Documents are submitted to DGACM for processing eight weeks prior to each session, to be published four weeks before the session. If the language versions are not available at that time, OSEB distributes the document to delegations in the original language of submission.

43. Advance copies of the documents for each session are available in the original language of submission at the Executive Board section of the UNICEF website, which is maintained by OSEB (<http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index.html>).

44. Final versions in languages are distributed directly to Permanent Missions by DGACM. They are also available online via the Official Documents System (ODS) of the United Nations, maintained by DGACM (<http://documents.un.org>). Questions regarding access to ODS should be addressed directly to DGACM.

45. In addition to the documents prepared ahead of each Executive Board session, in-session documents, including conference room papers, statements, draft decisions and attendance lists, are produced and distributed during the course of the sessions. Following the end of each session, the final texts of all adopted Executive Board decisions are available the next day on the Executive Board section of the UNICEF website.

46. The official reports of Executive Board sessions are prepared by OSEB. The report details the organization of the session, a summary of the deliberations and the decisions adopted at that session. Each report is completed as soon after the session as possible and circulated to members for comments, corrections and clarifications. The final report of the session is then posted six weeks after the session on the Executive Board section of the UNICEF website.

47. At the end of each year, the reports for all Executive Board sessions of that year are combined into one comprehensive report, which is issued as part of the official records of the Economic and Social Council.

48. In line with efforts to reduce the amount of documentation produced by the United Nations, the Executive Board increasingly is using oral reports by the secretariat in place of formal, written reports.³² When an oral report is on the agenda for a session, four weeks beforehand, the secretariat prepares a one- to two-page background note and posts it on the Executive Board section of the UNICEF website so that delegations will be able to prepare for the discussion.

³² See Executive Board decision 1996/35 (E/ICEF/1996/13/Rev.1).

Logistics of the sessions

Credentials

49. Prior to each session, delegations send formal credentials to the Executive Director or the Secretary of the Executive Board conveying the names of their delegation members. The announcement of each session and request for credentials appear daily in the *Journal of the United Nations*, beginning four to six weeks prior to each session. A provisional list of participants based on the credentials received is distributed by the secretariat as soon as possible during the session, and the final list is circulated by OSEB before the close of the session.

Documentation Booth

50. During each session, the UNICEF secretariat establishes a documents booth in the meeting room where delegates can obtain additional documentation for the session. Delegations are expected to bring to the session documents previously made available to them. In-session documents, draft proposals and any statements by delegates submitted for distribution are circulated by conference room staff during the meetings.

United Nations grounds passes

51. Delegations of States members normally obtain United Nations grounds passes from the Protocol and Liaison Service through their Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Passes for representatives of National Committees for UNICEF who are not members of any State delegation are coordinated through OSEB. The Office of Public Partnerships of the UNICEF secretariat coordinates passes for representatives of accredited non-governmental organizations.

General information and schedules

52. All Executive Board session plenary meetings are interpreted in the six official languages of the United Nations. However, interpretation of informal consultations or meetings is not guaranteed, but may be provided, depending upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

53. OSEB maintains a support office in close proximity to the conference room, and its staff, as well as the conference servicing staff, is available to assist delegates. Meeting times and the order of debate are updated daily in the *Journal of the United Nations*.
