

12 January 2005

**United Nations Children's Fund**

Executive Board

**First regular session 2005**

17-20 and 24 January 2005

Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

**The safety and security of UNICEF staff: oral report  
Background note**

1. There is little doubt that the world has become a more dangerous place within which to live and work, and more than ever UNICEF staff are being required to operate in high risk environments in order to deliver our vital mandate. Throughout the past year, United Nations staff and humanitarian workers have been murdered, kidnapped and threatened by terrorist and extremist organizations. Further, the fear of being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and being killed or injured by indiscriminate acts of extreme violence, or of falling victim to crime, proved to be an every day reality for colleagues around the world.

2. In the past year, we recorded a total of 153 serious incidents affecting UNICEF staff, their immediate dependents and assets, which have included cases of kidnapping , abduction, extortion , rape, armed robbery, burglary and carjackings. Staff have been shot at, assaulted, threatened and intimidated. Already this year, one of our drivers employed by the Somalia country office in Nairobi, was tragically murdered in the street by armed robbers.

3. At the beginning of the 2004, Carol Bellamy addressed the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP and stated that “there is no more precious asset to us than our people and therefore their security and well-being is of utmost concern to us”. So what have we done to address this?

4. Throughout the last year, in close association with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), the United Nations funds and programmes and members of the NGO and INGO communities, many of whom suffered a similar litany of incidents, a number of reviews, evaluations and studies were concluded through the Inter-Agency Security Management Network and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). These resulted in the implementation of a number of broad- based strategies, including:

(a) The introduction of a security risk management (SRM) model, which provides for structured analysis of factors constituting potential threats, risks and vulnerabilities, that impact staff security and the ability to conduct programme activity safely;

---

\* E/ICEF/2005/1.

(b) The review and refinement of Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) which, set against the above mentioned SRM, provide for the implementation of country-specific measures necessary to mitigate risks and enable safe programme activity;

(c) The introduction of a security training package via CD-ROM entitled *Basic Security in the Field*. This has been successfully undertaken by nearly every single UNICEF staff member, at all levels and in all locations;

(d) Work is also ongoing through the IASC to refine guidelines on greater collaboration between the United Nations and NGO/INGO communities with regard to sharing information and coordinating security management in the field.

5. It is important to note that the above actions are constant, and effort will be required to maintain and sustain them, allowing us to continually assess our risks and continue working. That they are effective measures is beyond question, and without them our work would not only have been considerably disrupted but the number of incidents recorded to the detriment of staff and the organization would have been much higher.

6. Another extremely important project undertaken in 2004 culminated in the Secretary-General's report and subsequent General Assembly resolution on a "strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations (A/59/448/Add.2). UNICEF was very supportive of this proposal and was closely involved in its formulation, with the Executive Director representing the funds and programmes in the consultation process.

7. The result will be the establishment of a new Department of Safety and Security (DSS) to be led by an Under-Secretary-General, which will in effect combine the offices of UNSECOORD, the United Nations Safety and Security Service and the field security component of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It will lead to a substantial increase in the number of professional field security coordination officers deployed to the field, where the vast majority of security will continue to be managed, and the creation of new posts in the DSS headquarters to support this service delivery. UNICEF will interact fully with the new DSS and will continue to be an active and integrated member of the United Nations Security Management System. We believe that strengthening the security system was not only necessary but that once the changes have been fully implemented, the benefits as regards our ability to work and protect our staff will be far greater.

8. It must be stated, however, that none of this comes without a price. We were extremely grateful to the Executive Board for approving the \$14 million draw-down last year to enable us meet additional costs, which exceeded previous allocations, in order to achieve MOSS implementation especially with regard to enhanced measures identified during the global review. Following careful consideration and justification of need, all this money has been allocated and is being used to achieve full MOSS compliance within UNICEF, at least on the current threat levels around the world. We are currently evaluating progress with the regional and country Offices and should know the exact

status of implementation by the end of February 2005. What is certain is that we could not have realized any of this without the additional financial resources.

9. Further, the implementation of the General Assembly resolution will add a substantial financial burden to the organization, with the decision to retain the current cost-sharing mechanism and not fund the entire security package from the United Nations regular budget. Under the current arrangements, and based upon an annual staff census in the field, UNICEF is responsible for funding approximately 11.6 per cent of the overall field security budget, which currently equals over \$7 million per biennium. The exact additional budgetary implications to UNICEF as a result of the resolution are currently under discussion in the High-Level Committee on Management and have yet to be precisely determined.

10. Finally, it must be stated that the safety and security of staff remains a high priority within UNICEF. Security is now mainstreamed and is therefore a core component of programme planning and activity as well as an essential consideration for headquarters, regional and country office management. This is clearly reflected by the inclusion of security in budgetary guidelines, and specifically in the last year, with the publication of the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, where security of staff is recognized in the guiding principles. By maintaining a robust and proactive security capability, we should be able to continue to bring health, education, equality and protection to woman and children where their need is most, and keep our staff and assets as safe as possible in the process.

---