

**AS PREPARED**  
**Remarks of Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF**  
**UNICEF Executive Board, First Regular Session, Opening Remarks**  
**Tuesday, 12 January 2010 • New York, NY**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, good morning. A warm welcome to the First Regular Session of UNICEF's Executive Board. Mr. President, congratulations on your election and thank you for your service and hard work last year as a Vice President on the Board. We also appreciate the tireless efforts of the other outgoing Vice Presidents of the Board, the Permanent Representatives of Haiti and Romania and the Minister of the Permanent Mission of Japan.

Our agenda this week includes the roadmap for the integrated budget, the annual report to the Economic and Social Council, the private fundraising work plan, and a review of progress on implementing IPSAS. We will also review UNICEF's cost recovery policy approved by the Board in 2006. This amended policy has been very helpful in facilitating UNICEF's partnerships.

Mr. President, when my term as Executive Director of UNICEF concludes at the end of April, I will have served five extraordinary and rewarding years. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the mission of UNICEF and work with such talented and dedicated staff, National Committees and partners throughout the world. I am most grateful to the Executive Board for your support and leadership in our collective commitment to children.

UNICEF is guided by the urgency of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, recognizing that children are at the very heart of those goals. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, we have worked to strengthen the results-based focus of the organization to most effectively and sustainably achieve the rights of children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We have adopted "Unite for Children" as part of our brand, reflecting our aim to better partner, coordinate and collaborate with others, and leverage available resources for maximum results for children. We have shifted the orientation of our work to help governments build capacities and make informed decisions based on the best available evidence and practices. UNICEF has worked to ensure that resources are deployed where the burden and needs are greatest.

With over 90% of the global burden of the MDG's in Africa and Asia alone, we have convened special meetings of our representatives in those parts of the world, along with experts and partners, to address how to accelerate progress, particularly in health and nutrition.

Under five mortality has steadily declined, as UNICEF and its partners have focused on strengthening community based integrated primary health care systems for women and children. Progress has been accelerated by expanding basic child health interventions, including vaccinations, oral rehydration therapy for diarrhea, micronutrients, and treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

Measles mortality has declined by more than 90% in Africa alone since 2000, and polio is on the brink of elimination, with only four remaining endemic countries in the world. Global coverage for DPT 3 immunization has steadily increased to 82% in 2008, compared to just 20% in 1980. In the fight against malaria, UNICEF purchases of insecticide treated bed nets increased from 10.7 million in 2005 to 31 million in 2009.

In 2005, UNICEF and its partners launched Unite for Children Unite Against AIDS to put the missing face of the child on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Today, coverage of programs for prevention of mother to child transmission and treatment of pediatric AIDS has dramatically increased.

The inextricable link between the health of the mother and the health of the child has become a much more significant focus of UNICEF. Along with WHO, the World Bank and UNFPA, we are working to accelerate maternal health interventions in the highest burden countries.

Nutrition is now widely recognized as integral to both health and food security, with particular attention to children under age two whose cognitive ability will likely be permanently diminished without adequate nourishment in those formative years.

UNICEF has significantly contributed to accelerating the use of ready-to-use therapeutic foods for treatment of acute malnutrition, with our purchases of the product increasing from 100 metric tons in 2003 to over 11,000 metric tons in 2008. Vitamin A and zinc supplementation, salt iodization, and flour fortification have all been scaled up and rates of exclusive breastfeeding have improved.

UNICEF strategically invested in nutrition programs when global food prices rose, and our recently released nutrition scorecard report provides data and evidence on the nutritional status of children. As a member of the Secretary General's Task Force on Food Security, we have emphasized the importance of addressing nutrition security in the context of food security.

There are now more children in school than ever before, with significant improvements in gender equality in education. UNICEF has introduced the pioneering concept of child friendly schools to create a safer and more welcoming educational environment, especially for girls.

The protection of children has been very high on the agenda, from violence and trafficking to early marriage, female genital cutting, and sexual exploitation. We have worked to promote protective environments for children in communities, schools and

families and have forged innovative partnerships to address sexual violence against girls and women. The latest edition of UNICEF's Progress for Children provides the first comprehensive analysis of available protection data.

The November 2009 commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforced our resolve for a common agenda to achieve the rights of all children, with particular focus on the excluded: the poorest child, the disabled child, the sexually trafficked child, the child laborer, the child soldier, the abused child.

UNICEF has worked to better address the critical importance of women and girls in achieving health, education and protection outcomes to impact overall sustainable development. We have recognized the need for a particular focus on adolescent girls. Our gender policy is being finalized and our programs revised to better promote gender equality.

Our humanitarian work is better coordinated and more systematic, recognizing the need to address disaster preparedness, risk reduction and capacity building as well as response. UNICEF leads several of the recently established humanitarian clusters to facilitate the provision of basic health, education and protection services. The Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies have been mainstreamed into our work. Our continuing work with children impacted by armed conflict includes demobilization programs for child soldiers, and monitoring and reporting on implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

Along with our partners, we are helping countries implement social protection measures such as conditional cash transfers for the most vulnerable populations. Our work in communication for behavior change has been revitalized and an updated version of the resource tool Facts for Life will be introduced in the coming weeks. With the guidance of the Executive Board, our cooperation with Middle Income Countries has been strengthened with particular support for policies and capacity building to address disparities.

We have created an innovation unit with the aim of improving development outcomes with new uses of technology and innovative products. We have hosted forums to advance innovation and have partnered with New York University in a course entitled "Design for UNICEF". SMS technology is being used to track malnutrition and for supply monitoring. We are working in partnership to expand women's literacy through text messaging, and creating global youth discussions through the web.

Our youth participation programs have been expanded with the Junior-8 becoming a regular event at G-8 meetings. A UNICEF-facilitated youth forum in Copenhagen allowed young people to contribute to the climate change discussions.

The evidence base by which we make decisions and engage in collaboration with governments and others has been strengthened. Increased investments have been made in data, evaluation and knowledge management to better inform overall development

strategies and address gaps. The country-based situation analysis has been transformed from an internal planning document to a resource available for all interested parties. The Multiple Indicator Cluster survey for household data collection is now conducted on a 3 year cycle instead of 5 to ensure more timely information on progress. An office of research is being established and knowledge management systems expanded.

We are increasingly working with governments to transition from service delivery to providing technical assistance to help enable their own systems to better function.

Evaluations are now more strategic and better integrated into program design. Outside evaluations have been commissioned to give us a better understanding of the effectiveness of key programs.

Collaborative approaches have been critical in changing the way we work. UNICEF has strongly supported UN Coherence and partnerships among UN agencies and the World Bank in health, education, protection and humanitarian assistance. Our engagement with non-governmental organizations and the private sector has expanded and the Board has approved the strategy addressing collaboration and partnerships. UNICEF is more effectively convening at global, regional, country and community levels to co-create sustainable solutions.

The organization's accountability mechanisms have been strengthened. Audit compliance has improved, an office of investigation has been established, and an ethics officer appointed. Good progress has been made in implementing one ERP and IPSAS.

Our business processes, a source of frustration for both staff and partners as being too burdensome, are being streamlined and made more user-friendly. Non-governmental organizations have welcomed the recently concluded simplification of our cooperation agreement and guidelines for partnerships.

Significant improvements have been made on a range of Human Resource practices. A new E-recruitment system has just been implemented, and our senior staff rotation exercise is now in its fourth year of operation. An assessment program for both incoming and existing representatives has been established. Resources and programs for staff development have been significantly increased including better training for policy and advocacy, an improved new representative induction program, and a leadership development initiative to identify high potential mid-management staff.

One of the human resource initiatives, which I believe will have a lasting positive impact on the organization, is our New and Emerging Talent program, started two years ago to bring bright new talent with leadership potential into the organization.

For the last two years, we have undertaken an independently conducted all staff survey with the strong support of the staff association. The results consistently show that 93% of UNICEF staff is proud to work for the organization, an extraordinary result by almost any standard.

UNICEF's financial position has continued to improve. Between 2004 and 2008, total income, including trust funds, has increased more than 60%, to over \$4 billion. As an organization solely dependent on voluntary contributions, we are very thankful for the continued support of both governments and private donors for our work.

We especially appreciate our National Committees, which are an integral part of the organization, contributing significantly to resource mobilization and advocacy for children's rights.

Last spring, we convened a meeting of our senior management, country representatives, and national committee directors to look strategically at the future of UNICEF. Speakers addressed emerging global issues such as climate change, population growth including the youth bulge, economic trends and the expanding illicit economy, and technological innovation. Our discussions focused on how we can work more efficiently, creatively and collaboratively to provide leadership for children in a changing world. Those strategic discussions continue in our global leadership meetings, as we explore how to work more effectively in the future to promote the rights of children, and address the significant challenges remaining.

The dedicated, hard working staff of UNICEF is just one reason why I can truly say that serving as UNICEF's Executive Director has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Like our staff, I am truly proud to work for the organization. Today, UNICEF is a stronger rights-based and results-driven organization that will continue to effectively advance the agenda for children around the world. Together we have helped ensure that UNICEF's mission remains strong, vibrant and achieving results for the world's most vulnerable. My sincere thanks to you, our Board members, for your leadership, valuable advice, guidance and support.

\*\*\*