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Executive Board Statement  
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Thank you, Mr. President for your words.

And a special thank you to Alexandria and Felipe for sharing your thoughts on how we can best support your generation. We need your voices, and we need your action. So keep up the good work!

Thank you also to our President and Board members for your good work. Especially the current Bureau, on what is to be your last formal session.

Together, we worked through a number of complex issues. We were very lucky to count on such a supportive Bureau and President.

Please know that everyone at UNICEF values your ideas and your dedication to the futures of children and young people — all of them, no matter where they live.

And we value what you have achieved over the last year.

From the 18 — and counting — decisions so far this year.

To your progress on working methods.

To our new interactive approach to the country programme documents we’ll be discussing today. At your suggestion, we are taking a much stronger thematic focus in our deliberations on these important documents — at this session, we will zero-in on our child protection programming in these countries.

To your vital oversight function of our programming, which I will touch on in a moment.

To your advocacy with the people of your countries to raise the profile of children’s issues.
In particular, thank you for telling me about your plans to mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This anniversary is an important opportunity not only to celebrate the progress achieved over the last 30 years — but to keep the world’s attention focused on the important work still to be done.

In just a few short weeks, two high-level events at the United Nations will bring together children and young people, along with leaders from across government, civil society and businesses, to shine a spotlight on the importance of fighting for children’s rights — now more than ever.

However, these events are not ends in themselves. The world’s commitment must not end when the General Assembly ends and leaders return home.

To maintain the momentum, at July’s High-Level Political Forum, the co-chairs of the Group of Friends — Bulgaria, Jamaica and Luxembourg — shared a voluntary global pledge: For every child, every right. A new opportunity for every country to demonstrate its commitment to children’s rights.

You can find out more on the UNICEF website — and at tonight’s reception, which will also feature young speakers and performers, as well as a new photo exhibition courtesy of the World Press Photo Foundation.

As essential partners in our work — as part of UNICEF’s extended family — please join us at this important event. And let the world know that your country’s commitment to children and young people remains strong.

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As we prepare to mark the Convention’s anniversary, we must remind ourselves that the world has changed fundamentally over the last 30 years since the Convention came into being.

Climate change, cyberbullying, protracted conflicts, urbanization, mass migration, the youth unemployment bulge, the growth in birth rates in countries already struggling with poverty — these and so many other phenomena are changing what it means to be a child.

And they challenge us to continually strengthen our programming, to ensure our work responds to the needs of children and young people — their health, nutrition, education and protection in all contexts, including emergencies.
At our June session, we discussed the many concrete results we achieved in 2018 through our programming — again, thanks to your advice and support as we seek to reach our Strategic Plan commitments. From declines in under-five mortality, stunting among children and child marriage. To the millions benefitting from vaccinations, safe water, treatment for severe acute malnutrition, and education in emergencies. The list goes on and on.

This week, we will also have an opportunity to brief you on the roadmap for how we will measure our progress against our Strategic Plan commitments through the upcoming mid-term review. As always, we will rely on your ideas, vision and good stewardship as we review the Plan’s first phase and build on these lessons for the second phase.

As we do so, I urge that we focus on strengthening UNICEF’s programmes to ensure that they are positioned to contribute not only to better immediate outcomes for children themselves, but to the development and systems-strengthening goals of communities and countries themselves over the long term.

As countries climb the development ladder, we must ask ourselves: how can UNICEF’s programmes support them? As communities build stronger and more sustainable systems for the future — including systems that can prevent and respond to humanitarian emergencies — what can UNICEF do to help?

Take our health programming, for example. As you know, last year’s Astana Declaration calls on the nations of the world to work to deliver on our promise of universal health coverage through better, more accessible community-based primary health care.

Health systems continue to fail millions around the world. The new mother at risk of infection and even death because her community lacks a proper health facility. The child at risk of preventable disease because there are no vaccination facilities available. The millions of children whose futures are blighted because they suffer from severe acute malnutrition, with no treatment nearby.

With our government and civil society partners, UNICEF is working to build stronger primary health systems that can reliably deliver community-based services in all contexts.
This includes in emergency contexts, where we are integrating our humanitarian and development programming not only to reach people in their time of need, but to help these countries build health systems over the long-term.

In Afghanistan, for example, many rural communities have no access to basic services like vaccinations, sick child care and antenatal screening. With the support of Japan and South Korea, UNICEF is strengthening primary care for over one million women, children and newborns, through 70 mobile health teams linked to — and supplied by — local community health services.

We are also intensifying our focus on integration — bringing our health programmes together to deliver a number of key interventions in one place, at the same time.

This includes integrating screening for severe acute malnutrition into routine medical visits in countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

It includes delivering packages of Early Childhood Development information and interventions like nutrition screening and learning kits in health facilities where parents bring their children for routine vaccinations and checkups.

And it includes integrating our services and programming when we support communities facing a health emergency such as a pandemic.

Take our approach in fighting Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example.

UNICEF and our implementing partners have 1,200 staff on the ground, along with nearly 2,000 social mobilizers and psychosocial workers contributing to key areas of the response. This includes infection prevention and control, psychosocial and nutrition support, paediatric care and support for vital supplies and logistics.

But as we respond to the immediate crisis and work to prevent the spread of Ebola, we are also working to strengthen health systems and community awareness for the future, to prevent or manage future outbreaks.

Through the new Strategic Response Plan, we are rehabilitating basic services and physical health structures, while strengthening social safety nets and social cohesion through community engagement.
UNICEF’s staff members are working directly with households and communities to give them the tools and knowledge they need to prevent or detect new cases, enable culturally appropriate and safe burials, and help decontaminate households and other transmission sites.

We are also in constant contact with influential political, community and religious leaders, Ebola survivors, and mass media, to bring crucial knowledge on symptoms, prevention and treatment to at-risk households and communities.

Mass communication, vaccinations, rapid detection, treatment and isolation, community engagement — all are critical, and UNICEF is bringing our expertise and experience to bear in all of these areas.

So as we look ahead to the mid-term review of our Strategic Plan, I urge that we continue focusing on how UNICEF’s programming can not only serve children’s needs today, but also the needs of their countries and communities as they prepare for the future. And that we ask ourselves how our organization can help build the health systems — and education systems, and water systems — that communities need for the future.

The upcoming mid-term review will be an important moment for us to take this longer view, and ensure that all of our programmes are aligned around supporting communities’ development progress — even in emergency contexts. I look forward to our deliberations on this.

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As we strengthen our programmes, we will also continue strengthening our partnerships, which are so critical to everything we do as an organization.

From governments and our family of National Committees around the world who do so much to draw attention — and resources — to the needs of children and young people.

To our NGO and CSO partners, who work shoulder-to-shoulder with UNICEF’s staff members around the world.

To our growing partnerships with international financing institutions. As we will discuss during the structured dialogue on financing the Strategic Plan, our ties are dramatically expanding with key partners like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, GAVI and so many others. Organizations that appreciate UNICEF’s expertise, experience, trust among governments, and programmatic reach.
To our sister agencies who are working with us to translate our shared vision of UN reform into results on the ground.

This includes the new Management and Accountability Framework being rolled-out at the country level, and the ongoing review of our procedures and guidelines to fully support the development of integrated UN Sustainable Development Co-operation Frameworks.

It includes the reinvigorated Resident Co-ordinator system at country level, to help deepen partnerships and expand innovation and advocacy around the world. This is an organizational priority, and we are working across UNICEF teams globally to make it a success.

It includes the Funding Compact. UNICEF has led important inter-agency work on how this important piece of UN reform can be operationalized. We will honour our commitments and — together with our UN partners — appeal to Member States to honour theirs, and increase both the volume and quality of development funding.

And it includes our ongoing efforts to develop business cases to explore additional savings through the use of common premises and back-office functions.

At the global, regional and country levels, UNICEF has an important role to play in making these reform efforts a success. In my opening statement to the Board in June, I underscored my personal commitment to this work and to continuing to keep our focus where it belongs: not on processes, but on sustainable results at the country level. Again, we greatly value your support in this area.

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Throughout our work with partners, we have an important opportunity to achieve results in new ways — especially with the private sector, which we will discuss at Friday’s special session.

We think we can do far more in the years ahead with our corporate partners. And in fact, we must. We cannot reach the Sustainable Development Goals — nor build a better future for children — without bringing the private sector to the table.

Yes — fundraising will always be essential. And we must do more of it, across every programme.
This week’s structured dialogue on financing our Strategic Plan will be an important discussion in this regard. As you will recall, the approved Strategic Plan, for the period 2018-2021, foresaw a total projected income of $22.8 billion over the four years, including $7.5 billion net from the private sector.

And we’ll present our financial report for private fundraising and partnerships for last year, to measure our progress and determine what we must do to reach these ambitious targets.

While overall income continues to grow, there is an early indication that the global fundraising market is becoming more competitive and challenging, especially when it comes to generating core resources. These resources are vital to our operations. We are now reviewing this, and looking into next steps. We will keep you informed throughout.

But fundraising is just part of the picture.

Our private sector partners, in particular, want to be seen as more than donors. They also have a great hunger to lend their ideas, products, innovations, market reach, research and development, and expertise to support and improve the lives of children and young people.

In fact, businesses have always been part of UNICEF’s story. Developing, scaling-up and delivering lifesaving medicine, new products and vaccinations. Developing drone and communications technology to help us break down the distance between children and the test results, education, immunizations and information they need to be healthy, safe and prepared for the future. And so much more.

Our Strategic Plan recognizes the need to do more with our corporate partners. We are embarking on an organization-wide approach we are calling “Business for Results.” We want to engage more systematically with business within our programming to benefit children at scale.

We are doing so not only for the sake of increased revenue, but for the sake of children and young people. Not only to encourage them to adopt child-friendly practices — but to help us find new ways to support governments as they live up to their promises under the Sustainable Development Goals.

One report from the Business and Sustainable Development Commission found that these goals represent an estimated $12 trillion in market opportunities. From food and agriculture. To cities. To energy and materials. To health and wellbeing.
So these efforts benefit not only children — they benefit businesses, too, as they expand their market reach across high, middle and low-income countries. And as they translate their commitment to a better, more sustainable future into reality.

These partnerships can also open doors to new innovations that can change our world — and improve children’s lives.

As you know, UNICEF is helping to drive a number of innovative solutions — including what we call GIGA: “Global Information Goods Alliance.” This includes an ambitious initiative to gather partners around connecting every school in the world to the internet, as well as investing in digital products and services that build literacy, skills-development and training for young people.

We are also partnering with UNDP to issue a call to all staff from both organizations to submit promising ideas around innovation. Specifically, we want to identify five key ideas that we can bring to scale.

As we will discuss at our February session, we want to work with our private sector partners to move the needle on a range of other cutting-edge inventions. From imaging technology that can diagnose cerebral damage from lack of appropriate nutrition or stimulation in the earliest days of a child’s life. To a device that can instantly scan compounds and detect substandard or falsified medicines and pharmaceuticals. To a long-dreamed-about preventive vaccine for HIV.

I have asked our new Deputy Executive Director of Field Results, Fayaz King, to lead our overall approach. Fayaz assumes his role next month, but is here with us today. Welcome Fayaz, to the UNICEF family.

All of these breakthroughs depend on making business part of UNICEF’s “DNA.” They depend on putting a new priority on the expertise, products, practices and market reach of businesses as we achieve results for children.

At the special focus session Friday morning, we will discuss with our partners at Microsoft, LEGO and Millicom about how their operations are improving children’s lives, and how we can join-up our work in key areas to achieve even more results together. I hope to see you there.
As Board members, you have a key role to play in helping us identify companies of all sizes — big, small and medium-sized enterprises alike — who could work with us on these issues. I hope you’ll take the opportunity of February’s session to invite some of your business contacts to join us to discuss what they can offer.

But throughout our work, we must recognize that success in building these partnerships is not automatic. It requires a change in mind set. We must work to understand each other and find ways to marry profit and purpose.

Businesses need to understand and address the impacts of their operations on children and communities — including by adopting child-friendly practices that end the scourge of child labour or other abuses. As a UN agency, UNICEF will always put children’s rights front and centre as we pursue partnerships.

At the same time, UN agencies who want to tap into the lifesaving products and expertise of the private sector must understand that businesses face unique pressures from investors and shareholders, and the caprices of global markets. Every day, in the face of a changing, competitive and unpredictable global landscape, businesses deal with the tension between short and long-term profit, and short and long-term results.

Many businesses also view UN agencies like UNICEF as being inflexible and bureaucratic.

It is on us to find new ways to constantly make our operations more effective and demonstrate what we can offer. Like our expertise on children’s issues and designing effective programmes. Our global network of Country and Field Offices. And our long history of collaboration with governments, both global and local, who trust us to act with one over-riding concern — the rights of children and young people.

In short, we see huge opportunities — and huge benefits — on all sides from accelerating our work with our private sector partners. I look forward to a good discussion with you on this important priority.

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But as we seek out opportunities outside of our organization, we are seeking to be more effective inside UNICEF, as well.
That includes strengthening UNICEF’s organizational culture. In particular, I look forward to discussing with you the findings of the Independent Task Force Report and our management response to these findings.

As we read the report, we need to remember that UNICEF staff members remain proud of our organization — and rightly so. We have done so much for children over our history, and we are proud of our results.

But we must not turn away from the fact that some of our people, and our managers, are not living up to our collective aspirations. Some staff members have not been treated with the care, respect, trust, integrity and accountability that is expected from — and deserved by — all of us.

In particular, the Task Force has sounded the alarm on some key underlying issues identified by staff members — issues around trust, accountability and communication. They feel that, in cases of wrongdoing, they do not always trust management to do the right thing. They feel that perpetrators are not being held to account. And that communications around the decisions made are not being shared effectively.

While the situation is unacceptable, it is not unfixable.

The entire team at UNICEF is united behind change in every office, across every function and location. Staff members must be held accountable for their actions…for doing or not doing their job…and for not living up to UNICEF’s core values at all times.

We take this very seriously. Last week, we announced a number of sanctions of staff since the start of this year. These included nine dismissals or separations from service — including five for sexual harassment. They also included two demotions, three decisions imposing a loss of steps in grade, and four written censures.

And as we will discuss in more detail this week, we are moving forward on a number of measures to improve how we approach resolution mechanisms like investigations, and how we manage our people, including through the human resources function.

We will better train managers so they have the tools to lead their teams with the respect our people deserve.
And we will explore options to increase mediation services available to UNICEF, and strengthen staff engagement in building up our organizational culture at different levels.

I look forward to hearing your views on this as we continue building the UNICEF children and young people need — and that our staff deserve.

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After all — UNICEF is our staff. And they’re sparing no effort to support children and communities worldwide.

Those braving danger and threats to deliver lifesaving vaccines.

Those working with community groups in the fight against Ebola — changing minds and practices to defeat this disease.

Those working with local authorities to build up — and often, re-build — community health centres and schools post-crisis.

Those working with governments to provide community-based health care for their citizens — an essential step in our journey towards universal health coverage where every person can access care, in every community.

Those working with girls to get them into school and keep them there, building their confidence, and showing them that a future of their own shaping is more than a distant dream — it’s an achievable reality.

Those working with migrant and refugee children, and those brutalized by conflict, including former child soldiers, so they can know — finally — the protection and care that every child deserves.

Those working with parents to give them the information they need to promote good early childhood development, and nourish their children’s growing bodies and brains.

Those working with IFIs and governments to provide families with the well-funded social assistance programmes they need to make ends meet, and help their children build a better future for themselves through education.

Those staff members on the front line of these conflicts — including those working directly with warring parties to negotiate precious humanitarian access and build bonds of peace and trust.
Those UNICEF Child Protection officers who are — daily — working to ensure that every country, whether high income, middle income or least developed, has basic systems in place to protect all children, in times of stability as when a crisis hits.

Those pushing boundaries and helping us apply new innovations to serve children’s needs — from drones to medical breakthroughs to distance learning through technology.

Those working on Generation Unlimited to rally partners around the cause of our time: preparing a generation of young people to enter the workforce with the skills and training they need.

And those working tirelessly to draw new partners, new resources, and new supporters to our work.

To those staff members watching or listening in today — please know that your work is valued by all of us here today. As you spare no effort to support children, we will spare no effort to support your work, your workplace, your organization, and the results you are achieving.

The entire UNICEF management team — and all of the members of this Executive Board — stand with you. Once again, thank you for your support and hard work.

I look forward to a productive week.

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