Madam President, thank you.

It is very encouraging and heartwarming to hear Ms. Henrietta Fore talk about the unwavering commitment of UNICEF and its staff during the pandemic. The year 2020 has been quite a challenging year, and we all had to adapt and reframe the way we live, work and interact with others.

To fight this pandemic, UNICEF put its expertise to the test and succeeded: through the procurement of necessary medical equipment and supplies and life-saving vaccines and medication, the implementation of WASH supply and services or the availability of distance learning and online tools, UNICEF has effectively and swiftly responded to the new challenges and needs brought about by the pandemic.

At this time, Madam Executive Director, let me stress the urgency that child protection services be available to assist our children and youth. When online, they are particularly vulnerable to risks and threats hidden in social media and in mobile apps that are often invisible to their families and friends. When at home, children and youth can be easy targets and victims of domestic
violence, also as a direct result of the pandemic. UNICEF can and must be a strong voice for raising awareness about existing official protection mechanisms, and partner with local governments to broaden the reach of such services to places where sometimes UNICEF is the only entity present.

In the midst of our international crisis and economic downturn, it is understandable that UNICEF be prudent when recalibrating its financial estimates for the next years. Since contributions from the public sector might suffer due to limited or non-existent fiscal spaces, we trust that UNICEF will further explore new and innovative partnerships with the private sector and with international financial institutions. We would also encourage that South-South cooperation be strengthened, as this mechanism can provide great impact even with little resources.

Madam Executive Director,

At this session, the Executive Board will have the opportunity to deliberate and approve two important issues: working methods and the new joint comprehensive cost recovery policy. The collaboration among NY-based entities that allowed for this further improvement is an example for the UN Development System that must be followed by other agencies, funds and programmes.

As we look ahead, we will soon engage in the preparations for the next UNICEF Strategic Plan. Let me underline the necessity of a thorough consultation process that include inputs from country level, local governments, communities and other stakeholders that will partner and benefit from UNICEF programmatic activities. Likewise, I would recall the need for UNICEF to be fully engaged in the consultations aimed at the preparations for the next QCPR,
while also implementing the remaining pieces of the reform of the United Nations Development System. We count on UNICEF to keep on leading by example in both development and humanitarian contexts.

Allow me a final word of appreciation for the leadership of the President of our Executive Board, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, throughout our sessions and our Bureau meetings. Your guidance proved central to the quality of the work of this Board and for allowing us to exercise our duty as an Executive Board during these challenging times.

I thank you.