Chair, Madam Executive Director

We submit this statement on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the already challenging humanitarian situation in countries facing conflict, forced displacement, epidemics, natural disasters or the effects of climate change. In many countries, the pandemic is causing large socio-economic damage. Emerging data and reports show that unfortunately all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, discrimination and arbitrary detention against individuals have intensified since the outbreak of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has a significant negative impact on one of the most vulnerable groups, namely on children, their wellbeing and future prospects. We are concerned about their access to basic elements: health services including vaccination; education and training; food; nutrition in particular for children affected by Severe Acute Malnutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; and protection. The closure of schools leads to further marginalisation of children. Therefore, protection and education need to be part of our integrated response to the pandemic.

We call on UNICEF - and the UN - to capitalise on the UN reform dynamics and centre their COVID-19 response along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach. We encourage a collective
response in the spirit of effective multilateralism and concerted efforts. The Global Humanitarian Response Plan is a key opportunity to demonstrate strong collaboration, delivering as “one UN“, and is also the opportunity to build clear synergies with other aid organizations as well as with development actors.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic requires significant resources, in addition to already existing important development and humanitarian needs. In this context, the EU strongly encourages UNICEF to strive for efficiency gains, in particular by ensuring a maximum of aid reaches final beneficiaries, in line with Grand Bargain commitments, and maximising the use of joint programmes that can meet the current challenges. It is important to build synergies with others and work together with a clear distribution of tasks to efficiently and effectively address the needs of the most vulnerable, achieve collective outcomes.

UNICEF’s response to the pandemic comes in addition to delivering emergency humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and helping build longer-term resilience and development capacities. We appreciate the work of the staff of UNICEF and its implementing partners in providing these responses. Staff is a key asset of UNICEF and, in this respect, we welcome the regular update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Thank you.