Mr. President,

Distinguished representatives of UNICEF,

Dear members of Executive Board,

I am pleased to make a statement on the UNICEF Country Programme Document for Serbia for the period 2021-2025.

I take this opportunity to highlight the longstanding fruitful cooperation Serbia has enjoyed with UNICEF which dates back to 1947. Ever since, we have worked together in partnership for the benefit of children and youth at the national level, as well as at the regional and international level through sharing knowledge and experiences. If I may say so, UNICEF is one of the most recognizable if not the most recognizable UN brand in Serbia among the general population.

We are happy to see that such cooperation continues to date and we welcome the fact that UNICEF maintained high level of engagement, good communication with all state institutions and a visible media presence in Serbia throughout the previous period. This was particularly demonstrated through joint comprehensive evaluation of the current plan, as well as close collaboration in developing this new Country Programme Document which the Serbian Government wholeheartedly supported.

UNICEF has continued to provide valuable and timely policy and technical support in response to government of Serbia priorities, which have been translated into concrete and effective action. Some of the notable results achieved with UNICEF support include:
• **Early childhood development** – advocacy resulted in the ECD Call for action co-signed by three key line ministries (health, education, social affairs) and the Council for Child Rights and implementation of ECD integrated interventions in a large number of municipalities across the country;

• **Early childhood education and care** – support to development and adoption of the new National preschool curriculum framework and corresponding professional development programmes reaching almost 70% of the entire preschool workforce in the country.

• **Elimination of Violence Against Children** – technical support and advocacy resulted in adoption of the new National Strategy on violence against children; inclusion of online safety of children into the national Digital Strategy, establishment of the National Coalition Against Child Marriage and, and Serbia joining the ‘We Protect’ Global Alliance.

• **Support to Refugee and Migrant COVID-19 response**, including with the provision of most needed medical equipment and distance learning support

• **Strengthen tripartite partnerships with government, UNICEF and Businesses** as well as government and International Financial Institutions for the provision of social services.

Aligned with the Serbia strategic documents and the draft United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the new Country Programme will provide support to the Government in three priority areas:

• **Improvement of innovative financing, partnerships and social policy**, including with IFIs/private sector to sustain and scale-up interventions especially in the
area of early child-development, and at municipal level to ensure decentralization works for children.

• **Renewed emphasis on young people**, with a focus on skills building/entrepreneurship, mental health and participation, including a major refocus on inclusive education and digitalization in education.

• In line with the vision of the Government’s 2025 National Investment Plan and its priorities, as well as the Government COVID-19 recovery measures, there will be an **increased focus on innovation and development of human capital** and the emerging theme of **climate change and environment in the framework of the socio-economic recovery plans**.

We note with satisfaction that UNICEF in partnership with our government has been able to secure strategic multi-year funding for several CPD priorities already and we will continue together to leverage more to ensure acceleration and scale of results for every child in Serbia.

I would like to add that we greatly appreciate UNICEF’s careful approach in planning and implementation of activities in the province of Kosovo and Metohija in a status neutral manner, in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999), and we expect that it will continue to contribute significantly to the advancement of children’s rights within it’s mandate as indicated in the addendum to Serbian CPD. Today’s statement of the youth advocate from Priština on the issue of disability is a great testimony to the significance of UNICEF’s work in the Province. It is of utmost importance that all children in the Province, regardless of their ethnicity, fully enjoy child’s rights and human rights and freedoms including right to education, freedom of movement, right to use their mother tongue, freedom from fear etc.
Serbia is looking forward to working closely with UNICEF on the implementation of the new Country Programme Document and we take this opportunity to thank the outgoing UNICEF representative in Serbia Ms. Regina De Dominicis for her work and wish a warm welcome and successful tenure to newly appointed Representative Ms. Deyana Kostadinova.

I thank you for your attention.