STATEMENT
by the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the UN
H.E. Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva
at the UNICEF Executive Board Meeting during the Second regular session 2020 on
the consideration of the Country Programme Document for Turkmenistan
10 September 2020

Thank you, Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

First, I would like to acknowledge the important role of UNICEF and all the staff for their dedicated and tireless efforts to save lives and to improve the wellbeing of children around the world.

The year 2020 has been quite a challenging year due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, this pandemic has upended lives everywhere, and children’s lives have been deeply impacted. The Government of Turkmenistan has been taking measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the global economic crisis related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Government of Turkmenistan appreciates the long-standing partnership with UNICEF and continues to strengthen its cooperation with the UNICEF Country Office in Turkmenistan.

The vision for the country’s progress is set out in the Programme for Socio-Economic Development (PSD) of Turkmenistan for 2019–2025, embodying important elements for the well-being of children and families. The National Plan of Action on Realization of Child Rights for 2018–2022 (NPAC) covers a broad spectrum of child rights and addresses the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015).

Turkmenistan was one of the first countries to nationalize the Sustainable Development Goals and establish a mechanism for monitoring their implementation. The country adopted 148 targets and 175 indicators, 30 percent of which directly concern children. The 2019 Voluntary National Review provided a strategic opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Health services for children are widely available. Almost all deliveries 99.9 percent take place in maternity facilities. The immunization programme - fully financed by the Government.

Turkmenistan transitioned to a 12-year compulsory fee-free education system in 2013 and is building a comprehensive mechanism to measure the quality of teaching and boost learning outcomes.

Social-protection schemes include universal birth grants and universal cash benefits for children under 3 years of age, orphaned children and children with disabilities.
UNICEF has continued to provide substantive policy and technical support in response to government priorities, which have been translated into concrete and effective action, including for the pandemic-related preparedness and response. Some of the notable results achieved with UNICEF support include:

- The adoption of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategy for 2020-2025 and its action plan, representing a truly multisectoral responsibility aimed at ensuring that children and their parents can benefit from an equitable and affordable package of essential ECD services.
- Turkmenistan’s childhood vaccination rates remained high, at around 95 per cent. With UNICEF’s advocacy and support, the Government added three more vaccines to the schedule in 2019, bringing it fully in line with the WHO recommendation.
- UNICEF has led the development and implementation of a joint UN-Government programme for introduction of community-based social work services, aiming for a transformative change of the current social protection system.
- Turkmenistan is revising its curriculum to further reflect climate change mitigation and adaptation issues.

The new Country Programme has been developed in wide consultations with government counterparts, public organizations and the representatives of UNICEF. It is fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will provide upstream support to the Government to implement the priorities of the National Plan of Action on Child Rights, 2018-2022, and the Presidential Programme for Socio-economic Development of Turkmenistan, 2019-2025, particularly:

- Maintaining and consolidating the engagement on child and maternal health and nutrition and ECD;
- Expanding the engagement on education
- Reestablishing a child protection programme:
- Sustaining the dialogue on social policy, public finance management for children and social protection:

Today we are pleased to extend our support to the country programme for Turkmenistan, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend the UNICEF country team in Ashgabat for their hard work and dedication.

Let me express sincere gratitude to Ms. Afshan Khan, UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia Ms. Christine Weigand, UNICEF Representative in Turkmenistan, for their commitment, and continued and meaningful engagement with Turkmenistan.

We look forward to working closely with UNICEF in implementation of the new programme.

Thank you madam Chair.