Madam President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group of the Executive Board of UNICEF.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate our thanks for your leadership and, through you, to thank all the facilitators and Member States for their joint efforts leading to the adoption of important decisions under various agenda items. We are confident that their implementation will ultimately serve the world’s children and their families.

The African Group is fully committed to every child, every right, and to our collective action and joint efforts today to reach this goal.

Regarding the draft decision that was just adopted, entitled “Update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; the Morgan Lewis report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations; and the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority”, the African Group would like to underline the following:

- We highly appreciate the Executive Director’s proactive stance and firm commitment to bold actions and a change in organizational culture to ensure a responsible and caring environment for all UNICEF staff, at all levels.

- UNICEF staff deserve no less than a safe, respectful and enabling working place, which will help them fulfil the mandate of protecting children’s rights.

- Addressing the issues covered in item 12 takes time, but that it has to start immediately. In this regards, we thank Madam Executive Director for the number of initiatives she launched to respond to that, particularly the establishment of an Internal Task Team on Anti-Racism and Discrimination to prevent and respond to all forms of discrimination, including racism and racial discrimination against Africans and people of African descent, in the policies, procedures and programs of UNICEF.

- The African Group is looking forward towards the report of the Internal Task Team on Anti-Racism and Discrimination, to be submitted to UNICEF Executive Board at its annual session of 2021.

- In conclusion, the African Group reaffirms and attaches great importance to all issues related to People of African descent. In its resolution 68/237, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent citing the need to strengthen cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of life.

- In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.

- The Group remains ready to continue engaging constructively on matters and measures conducive to the promotion and protection of their rights inside and outside the Organization.

We ask that this statement be reflected in the report of the meeting.

I thank you for your attention.