

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

# The UNICEF Executive Board

An Informal Guide

2015

unite for  
children

unicef 

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## UNICEF

1. The United Nations General Assembly established UNICEF on 11 December 1946 as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, to be utilized and administered “for child health purposes generally”, especially for children and adolescents in countries devastated by the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>
2. On 1 December 1950, the General Assembly expanded its limited mandate to meet “emergency and long-range needs of children and their continuing needs particularly in under-developed countries”.<sup>2</sup>
3. On 6 October 1953, the General Assembly – considering the role the UNICEF played “for the protection of the child” and in creating “favourable conditions for the development of the long-range economic and social programmes of the United Nations and the specialized agencies” – decided to continue the organization on a permanent basis, changing its name to the United Nations Children’s Fund while retaining the acronym UNICEF.<sup>3</sup>
4. UNICEF is administered by the Executive Director under policies established by the Executive Board in accordance with such principles as may be laid down by the Economic and Social Council.
5. In 1996, the Executive Board adopted the UNICEF [Mission Statement](#).<sup>4</sup>
6. In the almost seven decades since its founding, UNICEF has progressively expanded its work around the world, and currently has programmes of cooperation with the Governments of some 160 countries and territories, with a staff of over 10,000 worldwide, most of them based in field offices.
7. UNICEF secures its funding through voluntary contributions from Governments and donations from the private sector, including the 36 National Committees for UNICEF, as well as the sale of greeting cards and gifts or other private-sector fundraising activities.
8. The current work of UNICEF is guided by the Strategic Plan 2014–2017, adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session in September 2013.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF was established by General Assembly resolution [57 \(I\)](#) of 11 December 1946, continuing the work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, then being phased out.

<sup>2</sup> The initial mandate of UNICEF was extended for three years in General Assembly resolution [417 \(V\)](#) of 1 December 1950.

<sup>3</sup> The General Assembly established UNICEF as the United Nations Children’s Fund in resolution [802 \(VIII\)](#) of 6 October 1953, along the lines of its previous resolutions, “with the exception of any reference to time limits”.

<sup>4</sup> See Executive Board decision [1996/1](#) (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1).

<sup>5</sup> On the new Strategic Plan, see decision [2013/16](#).

## The Executive Board

9. The General Assembly established the Executive Board as the governing body of UNICEF when it created the Fund in 1946. UNICEF reports annually through the Executive Board to the Economic and Social Council, which in turn reports to the General Assembly. The Fund's work is reviewed annually by the Assembly as part of its larger debate on operational activities for development.<sup>6</sup>

10. UNICEF financial reports and accounts and the report of the Board of Auditors are submitted annually to the General Assembly, reviewed by its Fifth Committee and by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Advisory Committee also reviews the UNICEF biennial support budget and other related reports, as appropriate.

11. Since 1994, the Executive Board has been operating in its current structure, comprising 36 members, elected to three-year terms by the Economic and Social Council, with the following regional allocation of seats: 8 African States, 7 Asian States, 4 Eastern European States, 5 Latin American and Caribbean States and 12 Western European and other States (including Japan).<sup>7</sup>

12. The Executive Board's annual term is identical to a calendar year and runs from 1 January to 31 December. Each year, the Economic and Social Council elects members to the Board from among the United Nations Member States or States Members of the specialized agencies.<sup>8</sup> To ensure continuity of experience, only a certain number of new members are elected in any given year. Usually, each member serves a three-year term.<sup>9</sup> The Western European and Others group has established a rotation schedule for its members under which some States do not serve a full three-year term.<sup>10</sup>

### Functions of the Executive Board

13. The Executive Board provides intergovernmental support to the programmes of UNICEF, and supervises its activities, in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Board also makes sure that UNICEF is responsive to the needs and priorities of recipient countries.

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<sup>6</sup> See General Assembly resolutions [48/162](#) of 20 December 1993 and [50/227](#) of 24 May 1996 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. See also General Assembly resolutions [62/207](#) of 19 December 2007 and [63/232](#) of 19 December 2008, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 2009/214 and 2009/215 of 22 July 2009 ([E/2009/INF/2/ADD.1](#)).

<sup>7</sup> On the governing bodies of the development funds and programmes, see in particular paragraphs 21 to 29 of General Assembly resolution [48/162](#) of 20 December 1993.

<sup>8</sup> These elections are held during a resumed organizational session of the Economic and Social Council, held usually in May or June of each year.

<sup>9</sup> See the [composition](#) of the Executive Board since 1946.

<sup>10</sup> The curator of the rotation scheme is currently Switzerland. The United States of America does not participate in the rotation scheme.

14. The UNICEF Executive Board is subject to the authority of the Economic and Social Council and has the following functions:
- (a) Implement the policies formulated by the General Assembly and the coordination and guidance received from the Economic and Social Council;
  - (b) Receive information from the Executive Director and provide guidance on the work of UNICEF;
  - (c) Ensure that the activities and operational strategies of UNICEF are consistent with the overall policy guidance set forth by the Assembly and the Council, in accordance with their respective responsibility as set out in the United Nations Charter;
  - (d) Monitor the performance of UNICEF;
  - (e) Approve programmes, including country programmes, as appropriate;
  - (f) Decide on administrative and financial plans and budgets;
  - (g) Recommend new initiatives to the Council and, through the Council, to the Assembly, as necessary;
  - (h) Encourage and examine new programme initiatives;
  - (i) Submit annual reports to the Council at its substantive session; these could include recommendations, where appropriate, for improvement of field-level coordination.

### **The Bureau**

15. The five Officers of the Executive Board constitute the Bureau. They are elected by the Executive Board at its first regular session of each year from among the members for that year.<sup>11</sup> The Officers – the President and four Vice-Presidents – represent the five regional groups, with the presidency rotating among groups every year. As a matter of custom, permanent members of the Security Council do not serve as officers of the Board.<sup>12</sup>

16. The Bureau serves as a bridge between the UNICEF secretariat and the regional groups, dealing primarily with liaison, administrative and functional matters to enhance the effectiveness of the Executive Board. Members of the Bureau normally coordinate informal consultations within their respective regional groups. The Bureau normally meets monthly, and daily during the three yearly sessions of the Executive Board.

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<sup>11</sup> Prior to 1994, the officers of the Executive Board formed a Governing Council headed by a Chairman and four Vice-Chairmen. See the [officers](#) of the Executive Board since 1946.

<sup>12</sup> See also the [Rules of Procedure \(E/ICEF/177/Rev.6\)](#), in particular rules 11, 12 and 13 for details concerning their election and term of office.

## Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

17. The Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board (OSEB) is responsible for maintaining effective relationships between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board. In consultation with the President and other members of the Bureau, it organizes the business of the Executive Board and services all its sessions. OSEB also provides editorial and technical services for all documentation submitted to the Executive Board or resulting from its meetings. It has similar responsibilities in relation to informal consultations and briefings and Bureau meetings.

## Executive Board sessions

18. The Executive Board holds an annual session, usually in June of each year, as well as two regular sessions, the first generally in January or February and the second in September of each year. The sessions are held at United Nations Headquarters, although the Executive Board may accept invitations to meet elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

19. The Executive Board maintains a general outline of the division of labour between annual and regular sessions, although it retains the flexibility to discuss topics as required at any given session. The number of regular sessions is dictated by the workload of the Executive Board in a given year.<sup>14</sup>

## Annual organization of work

20. The Executive Board approves its annual programme of work at the last session of the preceding year. The programme of work is subject to change, as the Board also approves the specific agenda for each session at the start of that session. At all sessions, the Executive Director, as required, reports to the Executive Board on the relevant issues on the agenda.<sup>15</sup>

## First regular session

21. The first regular session usually focuses on the following agenda items:
- (a) Annual workplan and proposed budget for fundraising by the Private Fundraising and Partnerships division;
  - (b) Audited financial statements and report of the Board of Auditors;<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Under the terms set by General Assembly resolution [31/140](#) of 17 December 1976, the host Government will defray the additional cost to UNICEF of holding the session away from UN Headquarters.

<sup>14</sup> See the addendum to Executive Board decision [1994/R.1/2 \(E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1\)](#).

<sup>15</sup> See rule 17.3 of the [Rules of Procedure \(E/ICEF/177/Rev.6\)](#).

<sup>16</sup> The audited financial statements and report of the Board of Auditors are discussed every second year.

- (c) Pledging event;<sup>17</sup>
- (d) Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF;
- (e) Country programme documents.<sup>18</sup>

### **Annual session**

22. The annual session usually focuses on major policy and programme issues, progress reports and other issues that have broad interest:

- (a) Annual report of the Executive Director: progress and achievements against the Strategic Plan;<sup>19</sup>
- (b) Field visits undertaken by Executive Board members;<sup>20</sup>
- (c) Annual report on UNICEF internal audit activities;
- (d) Annual report on the evaluation function and major evaluations in UNICEF and a management perspective;
- (e) Country programme documents.

### **Second regular session**

23. The second regular session usually concentrates on the following agenda items:

- (a) UNICEF financial plan;<sup>21</sup>
- (b) Integrated budget (not every year);
- (c) UNICEF financial reports and statements, including the report to the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;
- (d) Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial reports and statements;
- (e) Country programme documents;

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<sup>17</sup> See Executive Board decision [1999/8](#).

<sup>18</sup> See Executive Board decision 2014/1. Country programme documents are considered and approved by the Executive Board, on a no-objection basis, in one session. Country programme documents are presented at the Executive Board session that is most appropriate in terms of government and country-level planning and priorities.

<sup>19</sup> See Executive Board decision [2001/22](#).

<sup>20</sup> If a field visit takes place later in the year, it is discussed at the following session.

<sup>21</sup> The exception is when the full MTSP is being considered, usually every fourth year.

- (f) Programme of work for the following year.

### **Joint meetings with the Executive Boards of other United Nations funds and programmes**

24. In keeping with recent practice, the UNICEF Executive Board sessions are usually held immediately before or after the corresponding sessions of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

25. Joint meetings with the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA have been held annually since 1998, to facilitate greater integration of governance oversight and to review issues and matters of common concern.<sup>22</sup>

26. Since 2000, the Bureau of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) has been participating in these joint meetings.

27. Since 2011, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has also participated in these joint meetings.

28. The agendas for the joint meetings, which are usually held around the time of the first regular session at the beginning of the year, are agreed upon by the secretariats of the funds and programmes, in consultation with the members of the Executive Boards through their respective Bureaux.

29. The meetings focus on overarching themes of relevance to all agencies, such as the transition from relief to development; HIV and AIDS; harmonization of budgets; staff safety and security; disaster risk reduction; ‘delivering as one’; achieving the Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 development agenda; innovation; food prices and nutrition security; gender mainstreaming; middle-income countries; least developed countries; and South-South cooperation.

### **Informal meetings**

30. Intersessional meetings, usually informal briefings or consultations, are held periodically during the year to discuss issues of particular interest to members or to provide additional information about subjects to be discussed at upcoming sessions. These meetings are held at United Nations Headquarters and are announced in the [\*Journal of the United Nations\*](#).

31. As a rule, a pre-session information meeting is organized before each session of the Executive Board. At these procedural meetings, delegations have the opportunity to

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<sup>22</sup> These joint meetings follow a recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General. See paragraph 162 in his 1997 report, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform* ([A/51/950](#)).

comment on the provisional agenda for the session or to raise with the secretariat questions about any of the agenda items.

32. Prior to each session, the secretariat may organize regional briefings on specific agenda items for a given regional group, if needed. Delegations are advised individually by the secretariat of the date and time of these meetings, which are held either in one of the smaller conference rooms at United Nations Headquarters or, if these are unavailable, at UNICEF House, a Permanent Mission to the United Nations or any other preferred location.

### **Conduct of sessions**

33. The Executive Board President presides over each session. Usually, the session begins with opening statements by the President and the Executive Director, followed by the adoption of the agenda for the session.<sup>23</sup>

34. All session meetings are supported by interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations.<sup>24</sup>

35. The provisional agenda, organization of work and timetable for each session are prepared by OSEB, in consultation with the Bureau. Delegations have an opportunity to comment on the provisional agenda at the pre-session information meeting, held before each session, and at the opening of the session itself.

36. Agenda items may be considered separately or in clusters. Each item on the agenda is introduced by the appropriate member of the secretariat and discussed by the Board. The Executive Director and other members of the secretariat respond to the statements made and issues raised by delegations at intervals during the debate of each agenda item. The Board may take a decision on the item in question or, if it is presented for information, take note of it. The Board may also opt to take decisions on items presented for information.

37. The effective use of time in deliberations is important. Debate is confined to the question before the Executive Board; the President may call a speaker to order if his or her remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion. The Board may limit the number of times the representative of each member may speak on any question. To make the best use of the time available, if the Board concludes its consideration of an agenda item ahead of schedule, it immediately moves on to the next agenda item.

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<sup>23</sup> In the absence of the President, one of the Vice-Presidents presides over the proceedings.

<sup>24</sup> Interpretation is not guaranteed for informal consultations or meetings, as these services depend upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

## Decision-making

38. The Executive Board takes all of its decisions by consensus. The decisions are to be short, in principle without a preamble, and should address the specific issue under consideration. To facilitate the decision-making process, the secretariat, in preparing documentation for consideration by the Executive Board, is mandated to include the text of a draft decision if a decision is required by the Board in that area.<sup>25</sup>

39. In addition, delegations may submit additional proposals on issues that reflect developments emerging from the debate, on issues covered in the documentation and on other subjects.

40. Each draft proposal must be formally introduced by its sponsor, an Executive Board member, during plenary meetings. Deadlines for the submission of written draft proposals may be announced to ensure sufficient time for translation and negotiation. Under normal circumstances, delegations should have at least 24 hours to examine proposals before decisions are taken.

41. The Executive Board President may send draft proposals to open-ended drafting sessions, usually coordinated by one of the Vice-Presidents. Time constraints have made it necessary to schedule drafting sessions in parallel with plenary meetings. Delegations generally hold informal consultations among themselves and reach consensus on draft decisions. Once agreed upon, final drafts are referred to the formal plenary session for action.

## Participation of observers

42. Right of participation as an observer in the deliberations of the Executive Board meetings, without the right to vote, is reserved to a Member State when its country programme is under consideration.

43. The Board may invite Member States and participants who manifest a special interest in the item or items under consideration to participate in the deliberations without the right to vote.<sup>26</sup>

## Informal discussions

44. The Executive Board sometimes chooses to hold informal discussions during its formal sessions. These discussions allow delegations and the secretariat to address issues without requiring that a formal document be prepared or to have a dialogue without the limits of an official debate. In the past, discussions have focused on programmatic issues (e.g. UNICEF HIV/AIDS prevention activities) and procedural

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<sup>25</sup> On the working methods of the Executive Board, see decision 1994/R.1/1 ([E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1](#)).

<sup>26</sup> See rules 50 and 51 and annex to the [Rules of Procedure \(E/ICEF/177/Rev.6\)](#), published on 20 May 1994.

questions (e.g. working methods of the Executive Board and terms of reference for its field visits).

## Field visits

45. Executive Board members have been taking part in organized field visits to a UNICEF country programme since 1993. Under the guidelines for field visits, adopted by the Executive Board in 2004, there are three visits per year, one each: (a) by the Bureau; (b) by members of the Board; and (c) a joint visit by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP.<sup>27</sup>

46. The countries to be visited each year are selected by the Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat and, in the case of a joint visit, with the Bureaux and secretariats of the other agencies. The President may also make field visits or undertake other official travel as necessary. The reports of the most recent field visits can be accessed in the Executive Board [field visits](#) section of the UNICEF website.<sup>28</sup>

## Documentation

47. The UNICEF secretariat submits all documentation to the Executive Board through OSEB, which provides editorial and technical services, not only for Executive Board session documents, but also for those resulting from Board meetings. OSEB works closely with the United Nations Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), which is responsible for the translation of official documents. In 2014, OSEB successfully piloted the outsourcing of translation of several Board documents into French and Spanish. This practice will be expanded progressively.

48. All documents are translated into the six official languages of the United Nations, with the exception of country programme documents (CPDs), which are available in English, French and Spanish only, and possibly an additional official language, if requested by a country whose programme is under discussion. Conference room papers (CRPs) are made available in English, and may also be translated into French and Spanish.

49. Documents are submitted to DGACM for processing eight weeks prior to each session, to be published four weeks before the session in all available languages. In keeping with United Nations guidelines, documents must not exceed 8,500 words.

50. The final official versions of these pre-session documents are published exclusively “paperless” through the United Nations [Official Document System \(ODS\)](#).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Executive Board decision [2004/13](#) and document [E/ICEF/2004/19](#).

<sup>28</sup> See the list of countries hosting [field visits](#) by UNICEF Executive Board members since 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Questions regarding access to ODS should be addressed directly to DGACM. Starting with the second regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2014, final versions of CPDs are available in all languages

51. Advance copies of the documents for each session are available in the original language of submission at the Executive Board [documents](#) section of the UNICEF website. These are replaced with the official versions published in ODS once they are available. The [UNICEF Executive Board website](#) is maintained by OSEB.
52. In addition to the pre-session documents prepared ahead of each Executive Board session (and published in [ODS](#)), there are also in-session documents that are distributed electronically during the course of the sessions.
53. In-session documents include conference room papers, presentations, including PowerPoints, the Executive Director’s opening statement, and, if available, delegates’ statements and the list of participants. For this purpose, a [PaperSmart portal](#) is available to access in-session documents electronically.<sup>30</sup> Printing on demand is also available.<sup>31</sup>
54. Delegations are encouraged to submit electronic versions of their statements to OSEB during the session so that they can be made available on the [PaperSmart portal](#). The statements are published only after delivery and remain accessible on the site after closing of the session.
55. Following the end of each session, the final texts of all adopted Executive Board decisions will be available on the [Decisions](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.
56. The official reports of Executive Board sessions are prepared by OSEB. The report details the organization of the session, a brief summary of the deliberations and the decisions adopted at that session. Each report is drafted shortly after the session, and circulated to members for comments, corrections and clarifications. The final report of the session is posted six weeks after the session on the [Reports](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.
57. At the end of each year, the reports for all Executive Board sessions of that year are combined into one comprehensive report, which is issued as part of the official records of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

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through ODS. Prior to the second regular session of 2014, final CPDs were only available via the UNICEF Executive Board website.

<sup>30</sup> The 2012 second regular session was the first PaperSmart session of the UNICEF Executive Board. All session documents continue to be available for downloading electronically through the existing Executive Board [documents](#) webpage, as per established practice. In addition, a new [PaperSmart portal](#), operated by DGACM, will make available all supporting documentation to the individual meetings.

<sup>31</sup> Printing-on-demand services remain available for Board members upon request in advance of the sessions by contacting OSEB.

58. In line with efforts to reduce the amount of documentation produced by the United Nations, the Executive Board has increasingly used oral reports by the secretariat in place of formal, written reports.<sup>32</sup>

59. When an oral report is on the agenda for a session, four weeks beforehand, the secretariat prepares a short background note and posts it on the Executive Board [documents](#) section of the UNICEF website so that delegations will be able to prepare for the discussion.

## Logistics of the sessions

### Credentials

60. Prior to each session, delegations send formal credentials to the Executive Director or the Secretary of the Executive Board conveying the names of their delegation members. The announcement of each session and request for credentials appear daily in the [Journal of the United Nations](#), beginning four to six weeks prior to each session. A provisional list of participants based on the credentials received is distributed by the secretariat as soon as possible during the session, and the final list is posted on the [PaperSmart portal](#) before the close of the session.

### Documentation

61. During each session, the UNICEF secretariat has staff available in the meeting room to help delegates with any requests for help with documentation for the session. Delegations are expected to bring to the session documents previously made available to them through the Executive Board website. In-session documents and any statements submitted by delegates are available on the [PaperSmart portal](#).

### United Nations grounds passes

62. Delegations of States members normally obtain United Nations grounds passes from the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service through their Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Passes for representatives of National Committees for UNICEF who are not members of any State delegation are coordinated through OSEB. Representatives of non-governmental organizations that hold consultative status with ECOSOC may observe and make interventions during meetings of the Executive Board.

### General information and schedules

63. All Executive Board session plenary meetings are interpreted in the six official languages of the United Nations. However, interpretation of informal consultations or

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<sup>32</sup> See Executive Board decision [1996/35](#).

meetings is not guaranteed, but may be provided, depending upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

64. During Executive Board sessions, OSEB maintains a support office in close proximity to the conference room, and its staff, as well as the conference servicing staff, is available to assist delegates. Meeting times and the order of debate are updated daily in the [Journal of the United Nations](#) and can also be found on the [PaperSmart portal](#).