We begin the session today with some key changes in our Senior and Regional Management teams.

First — as many of you know, and I wish I did not, this is the final session of the Board for Geeta Rao Gupta, who moves on at the end of this month. In her role as Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, we’ve all come to rely on her graceful, strong leadership and wise advice over the last five years. More than this, we’ve come to know her as a tireless champion for children everywhere — especially girls. She will be missed by us all — and especially by me. Our friend will always have a home here within the UNICEF family.

Omar Abdi, currently Deputy Executive Director of Field Results, has agreed to take Geeta’s place as Deputy Executive Director, Programmes — his third Deputy position. I’m grateful that I can continue relying on his good counsel, and his experience over a long and distinguished career at UNICEF — 24 years and counting, in both programme and management areas, and in the field.
In light of the Field Results Group’s objectives and work plan for the 2016 cycle, I’ve asked him to continue in his current role until the end of this year.

And so I’m very pleased to inform you that the Secretary General has approved the appointment of Maria Calivis to the post of Deputy Executive Director on an interim basis, until the end of the year. Maria is a familiar face to us here at UNICEF, with more than 32 years of experience and accomplishments, including as my first Chief of Staff, and Regional Director in both MENA and CEECIS. I very much look forward to working closely with her again.

With Omar undertaking his new role, it is with great pleasure that I also inform you of the Secretary-General’s decision to appoint Shanelle Hall to the post of Deputy Executive Director, Field Results.

Throughout her 18-year career with UNICEF — including most recently as Director, Supply Division — Shanelle has worked directly with country offices in UNICEF’s responses to emergencies and other challenges, leading a large team responsible for delivering essential supplies for children in over 150 countries. Her knowledge, innovative drive, experience and leadership will be great assets in her new role.
Today also marks the first Board meeting for Justin Forsyth — our new Deputy Executive Director for Partnerships, following Yoka Brandt’s departure. With an impressive record at Oxfam, the UK Government and, most recently, as Chief Executive of Save the Children/UK, Justin’s experience and energy are already proving to be invaluable. Once again, I welcome him to our team.

We also welcome our two newest Regional Directors.

First — our Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Marita Perceval. With a distinguished career in government, including as Permanent Representative for Argentina to the UN, we look forward to benefitting from Marita’s passion, knowledge and experience. Welcome to the UNICEF family, Marita.

And second — our incoming Regional Director for ROSA, Jean Gough, has a long history at UNICEF, most recently as our outstanding Representative in Nigeria. We look forward to benefitting from her energy and high competence in ROSA.

I am already encouraged not only by the wealth of experience and competence in our new team — but by their enthusiasm and numerous references to their being just that: “a team.”
Please join me in warmly congratulating Omar, Maria, Shanelle and Jean in their new roles — in welcoming Justin and Marita to UNICEF — and in bidding a very fond farewell to Geeta.

And now, to business.

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And these challenges will likely grow. Climate change is projected to worsen, even if all the pledges at COP21 are met. Populations will increase in those areas that can least afford it — including especially in sub-Saharan Africa and in urban areas already bursting at the seams. Unless more is done, the gap between the “haves” and “have nots” in every society will continue to widen. And we face a frustrating inability of parties to conflict to bring the human carnage to an end.

We most clearly see these challenges reflected in the faces — in the lives — of children.
From the children trapped by conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Iraq, Yemen or elsewhere…to the families worried about another flood or drought striking their neighborhoods. The child living with a disability, her future limited by prejudice and discrimination — judged for what she cannot do, rather than what she can. To the child of poverty facing yet another day without adequate nutrition…without education…without protection against abuse and exploitation…without a childhood.

Their lives remind us of the work we must do. All of us — governments… civil society and the private sector…the United Nations… and, of course, UNICEF.

Progress over the last two decades has shown that we and our partners can brighten the lives of hundreds of millions of children, whatever the general state of the world. Declines in under-five mortality since 2000 mean that an estimated 48 million additional children have seen their fifth birthdays. More are receiving the nutrition…the vaccinations…. the education they need not only to survive, but to thrive.

The Sustainable Development Goals represent an unparalleled path to building on this progress. Our challenge now is to act in ways worthy of our lofty words, goals and promises…to tangibly improve the lives of the millions of children still being left behind.
For UNICEF, this means doing all we can to strengthen every aspect of our organization, including particularly the three main engines of our organization — **people, resources, and partnerships.**

As an organization, UNICEF doesn’t serve the children and their rights, every day, around the world — our **people** do.

UNICEF is our people. We cannot make the world a better place for children if we fail to make UNICEF a continuously better place to work — a great place to work — for our employees worldwide. We achieve the results we want to achieve when our staff members feel they’re well supported from their recruitment until their retirement.

There is nothing more important than having the right people at the right time in the right places. Which is why our current effort to improve our human-resources system is an overarching priority.

To serve those who serve the children so well, our HR reform efforts are focused on reducing the burden of complex human resources processes. On providing the career-development and mobility opportunities they need and deserve. And always, to do so in a way that is explicitly linked to our core mission: results.
To succeed, our reforms must not only be designed and implemented for our UNICEF colleagues, but with and by them. We will continue to rely on our staff associations for their advice and participation. Especially as these reforms are in their early stages, and must be continuously shaped and refined as they progress.

Our reform is built around three goals: to improve recruitment…to manage our talent better — including a rotation policy and quick deployments to respond to crises…and to more effectively evaluate and manage performance.

First, recruitment. The success of our programmes demands that we recruit people as quickly and seamlessly as possible. “Quick” and “seamless” aren’t words often associated with the hiring practices of complex organizations like the UN — but with fast-changing global needs, and an increasingly mobile workforce, they must be.

So we’re redesigning our recruitment policies and processes to simplify — and, critically, quicken — them. A new e-recruitment process is being launched to support this effort.

We need strong, effective staff members. But we also need them to become — and to be — effective leaders and good managers over the course of their careers.
So we’ve also established an improved induction programme for new country representatives — including a coaching and mentoring component — so they can hit the ground running when they arrive at their new posts. An orientation programme for all new staff will follow shortly to give the newest members of our UNICEF family the same support.

Importantly, our efforts include a focus on the gender balance of our staff. Overall, since the last rotation exercise, our female senior staff stand at 47 per cent of the total — up from 45 per cent since last year — with more positions now being recruited. A promising — and overdue — accomplishment. One we will build on.

Second, better management of the talent within UNICEF. All of them — whether they’re serving in complex humanitarian emergencies, at headquarters offices, or working with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

And notably, our dedicated national staff members. They receive far too little recognition for their expertise and efforts — for their staying and delivering for children in every circumstance.
Of particular concern are our national staff members serving in emergencies. I’m thinking of our colleagues in Libya, who remained in Tripoli to lead emergency responses in WASH, education and child protection after the temporary evacuation of international staff in 2014. Or our staff in Yemen and Syria, who stay and deliver in the midst of great personal risk to them and their families. Or those who responded and supported the relief and rebuilding efforts of the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan.

In recognition of the efforts of our locally recruited staff in hardship-duty stations in the field, we’ve introduced flexible work arrangements — including the opportunity for them to spend a week in the capital city every ninth week.

All of our staff members are uncommonly driven. But we have to be careful. Their unflagging dedication — their courage to put themselves in harm’s way to serve others — can be a double-edged sword. While we need and deeply value our international staff members who become expert in emergencies, it can become too tempting to use them over and over again in dangerous, highly stressful circumstances.
And all our colleagues must be willing to serve in a variety of positions. For their sake as well as ours. So our new rotation and mobility policy is now in effect, with the rotation of middle management commencing in July — over 300 staff members.

With the constant support and advice of the Global Staff Association, we’ve also made some progress in staff welfare and benefits. And we’re scaling up the number of staff counsellors in the regions in greatest need where the wellbeing of our people is most at risk.

Our third area of reform is performance…specifically, results-based evaluations of staff performance.

Our recent Global Staff Survey reinforced what we’ve always known: that our staff members are uncommonly driven to achieve results. But “results” have not always been emphasized in how we measure our staff members’ performance.

Until now. Results-based staff evaluation and accountability will increasingly help us appoint and promote staff members primarily because of what they do and never because of who they are or whom they know.
By linking their work more firmly to results, we not only measure their actual achievements, we give these achievements the weight they deserve as their careers progress, especially our younger staff members who need a clear, merit-based path to advancement.

To support this effort, UNICEF has just launched “Achieve” — an online, results-based performance evaluation system for all UNICEF staff worldwide.

It should have an additional, “offline” benefit as well. It will encourage, even require, managers having more frank and honest conversations about the performance and career development of their staff. Two-way conversations in which staff members can also share their ideas and concerns about their workplace.

This will help build the culture of open dialogue we are trying to encourage in UNICEF. A culture in which every staff member feels free to speak her mind, and lend her voice and ideas to improving the organization we all love. To recognize that constructive debate — and dissent — are not only a right but a responsibility for every staff member in the organization.

But we can’t evaluate performance against results without knowing ever better what those results are.
Which is one reason why it is so important that our Field Results Group is working, in parallel, to improve our monitoring of measurable, not merely anecdotal, results.

Of course, we must also recognize that UNICEF is one of many partners working to achieve our results. Managers must be realistic in judging what results can be justly attributable to each staff member. We should keep the same point in mind, of course, as we properly make measurable results the focus of our Strategic Plan, to be discussed later this week.

There can be no results without resources. We remain deeply grateful to all the Member States, and all their citizens, including our wonderful National Committees, who contribute so generously to our work — especially in such a challenging time. A time of a weakening global economy. A time when the continued strength of the US dollar was largely responsible for a three per cent decrease in our total revenue last year, and a 13 per cent decrease in regular resources. And a time when an increasing percentage of our resources are focused on specific humanitarian needs rather than overall development.

Of course, the Syrian crisis, Zika, and the conflicts in Iraq, South Sudan, the Sahel, Yemen and elsewhere will continue to capture the majority of global headlines in the short-term.
But what about the lingering, long-term challenges that children face? What about the child whose future is threatened not by guns and mortars, but by a lack of sufficient nutrition? Not by a hurricane or tsunami, but because he lives in an urban slum without clean water and sanitation? Not by an urgent health crisis, but because she lives in a remote community, too far from medical care?

We must simultaneously address both challenges — with the resources to meet both. Because as we have discussed at previous Board meetings, the conceptual and organizational boxes in which we all place “emergencies” and “development” are artificial ones of our own making. Indeed, increasingly, our work shows the inherent links between them.

When, during an emergency in Ebola-affected countries, or in Banda Aceh, or in the Philippines, we support the establishment of a permanent community medical centre, a flood-proof school, or resilient water and sanitation infrastructure, we invest in that community’s ability to withstand future shocks. Resilient development.

When the No Lost Generation initiative helps provide education and protection in the midst of the Syrian humanitarian crisis, it is strengthening children’s resilient hearts and minds for the future. Also resilient development.
So as we renew our call to government partners for more Regular Resources — which is so vital — vital — to everything we do as an organization — we make an additional call: for flexible and predictable funding that can be used to address humanitarian emergencies in ways that incorporate long-term development goals — and development efforts that emphasize programmes promoting resilience and disaster-risk reduction. Addressing the causes as well as consequences of disasters.

At the same time, we can reassure our donors that we will continue exploring cost efficiencies throughout our organization.

As we did when we established the Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest, now in its first year. The Centre has already finished two-thirds of its initial ramp-up of 300 employees in total. After an initial expenditure of less than originally planned, the Centre is projected to save perhaps $20 million annually starting in 2017 — funds that can be devoted to our mission.
And efficiencies such as those being achieved by our Supply Division through new procurement and financing strategies. The Division achieved price decreases that saved governments, partners and UNICEF over $422 million last year. In total, between 2012 and 2015, the Division saved over $1 billion. A great result, and an excellent example of how our emphasis on innovation relies not only on advances in how we use information technology, but how new approaches to doing business can yield significant savings.

Finally, a word on partnerships — particularly UN partnerships and the results we achieve together.

The new QCPR presents an important opportunity to bring together capacities from across the UN system to make progress on the SDGs, and help those millions of children and their families still denied the progress they deserve. And to do so at a critical time in the history of the UN. A new, strategic QCPR can help shape our programmes and our partnerships to reach such goals. With equity. With a commitment to our universal mandate. And with a dedication to co-ordination. In our processes. Throughout our work. And, always, for results.

Like any good football team, we must emphasize co-ordination, not conformity. We must all play our positions…pass the ball when necessary…and care more about a goal than who scored it.
So I hope the QCPR will be strategic and supportive of UN action for “all the people,” as it states in our Charter. By continuing to lighten, not complicate, our processes — as we’ve done through the Standard Operating Procedures. By bringing together expertise and programmatic strengths from across the UN family — as country teams are doing through the Results Groups. By bringing our data-collection efforts closer together, to better identify and reach the most marginalized children everywhere. By common needs assessments and planning, not new bureaucratic layers. And by working together to focus on the most disadvantaged in every society — reflecting our shared commitment to universality.

And as we work in formal ways with our UN partners, we also look for opportunities to be agile together in ways that formal processes don’t always allow, particularly when emergencies strike. Increasingly, we are communicating directly and regularly to coordinate our work. From our work with UNHCR and WFP on cash transfer and voucher programmes in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon…to collaborating with WHO on the pricing of vaccines…to seconding our specialists to other agencies to help with their refugee responses…we are finding ways to deliver more quickly the results we cannot deliver alone.
As in previous Board statements, let me also emphasize strongly how important it is that we work ever more closely with civil society, the private sector — and private citizens, including children.

Under the leadership of Justin Forsyth, our new Deputy Executive Director for Partnerships, we are now exploring new ways to lend our expertise, resources and reach to partnerships and growing movements in areas like nutrition, protection, refugees and climate change.

Such movements and campaigns have been adrenalized by the revolution in information technology, drawing more and more people into an ever-widening circle of influence to organize for, and achieve, real change. A revolution that can help citizens even in remote areas voice their concerns. U-Report is a good example. This flagship system for SMS-based, real-time communications now has more than 2.2 million users in 20 countries — a number that continues to grow.

But contributing to any movement for children demands a certain humility — a recognition that our role is not always to lead these efforts, but rather tap into those areas where our partners are already engaged...where committed individuals are already lending their hands to shaping a better world for children...and for us all.
“A better world for children.” That is, ultimately, the driving dream for everything that we do at UNICEF — every staff member, every supporter and partner of our organization, and certainly, every person in this room today. The motivation behind all of our efforts to make our organization as strong, efficient and effective as possible.

All of us who know that real, accelerated progress for children is possible also know that we face a world that is now growing more dark, divisive and dangerous — a world that challenges our hope.

We, in turn, must challenge any global sense of hopelessness with the results we achieve together. Results that bring credit not only to UNICEF, but to the UN as a whole. And indeed, to all of our partners — from governments, to NGOs, to our private sector partners. And most importantly, results that may not win the same number of headlines as stories of conflict, misery and division — but results that actually change the lives of hundreds of millions of children for the better. Children.

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