Thank you, President Ashe. I know how busy you are in your duties regarding Rio+20 and appreciate your taking what time you can to be with us.

The Annual Session is, traditionally, our busiest meeting of the year, and this one will not disappoint. In addition to regular updates, we have the findings of several reports, including Oversight and Gender, to share with you. My Annual Report will be presented next by Geeta Rao Gupta.

Further to the announcements I made in the February session, I’d like to update you on some key senior positions and appointments.

First, I’m pleased to inform you that David Gressly, Regional Director, West and Central Africa, has been appointed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator as Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel Region. He’ll lead the combined UN response to the complex crisis there for the next five months. During this time, Manuel Fontaine, Deputy Regional Director, will be Acting Regional Director. I can think of no one more qualified than David for this challenging position. And Manuel is filling in admirably.

At the same time, I’m sorry to see two of our finest colleagues departing UNICEF for other positions. Poaching by others is the penalty we pay for the quality of our staff.
David Kanja, Director, Office of the Internal Audit, has been selected by the Secretary-General for the newly created position of Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the UN Secretariat. I know he will serve there with the same distinction he served UNICEF, to the benefit of all of us at the UN.

Afshan Khan, currently the Director of PARMO, will take a leave of absence to serve as Chief Executive Officer of Women for Women International. Afshan has done a great job in strengthening our partnerships with government donors, many of whom are here today. Remarkably, our income has increased during difficult economic times -- testament not only to the generosity of our donors, but also to Afshan’s tenacity and talent. She will begin her leave in June. Afshan, haste ye back.

I know you join me in congratulating David and Afshan on their new roles. We are moving quickly to fill these key positions.

And so to business.

A few weeks ago, we had an interesting internal discussion about the relationship between children’s rights and equity… and between the implementation of the equity strategy and UNICEF’s traditional human rights based programming. It reflected a similar discussion I had at Harvard, last December, with Professor Amartya Sen… on whether human rights and equity are in essence the same.
In the end, I think we all agreed on two points. One, at the philosophical level, the definitions of children’s rights and equity may differ in some details but are basically consistent. And, second, that in the end, the proper measure of our seriousness about children’s rights is to be found in the character of our results, not merely the quality of our rhetoric.

In short, without the guiding principle of rights, our practices are without purpose. And without being put into practice, our principles are pointless.

Thus, our intense work over the past year on refocusing our country programmes on equity. This year, the extent to which equity has begun to change the way we do business can be found in the pages of the Country Programme Documents that you will review during this session.

And thus also, as we continue our work on the MTSP, we are focusing on ways to put results in children’s lives at the heart of the plan, with a distinction between our goals and the means to achieve them. This will help us achieve greater strategic clarity and also enable us more clearly to link UNICEF’s work to developmental results.

We will continue to engage fully with member states, colleagues from other UN agencies, development partners, National Committees and others, as we review the current MTSP, learn lessons, and work to develop a concise, strategic guide for the coming years. The recent Board workshop on results based management, organized by the Bureau and including participants from all regions, was very valuable to us and -- I hope -- those of you who attended.

We are bringing the same approach to our active participation in the QCPR process.
The principle of UN agencies working together is absolutely right. It can be, and must become, a powerful device for achieving results in practice. As I’ve noted before, as we move forward in our discussions on the QCPR, we need all the more to concentrate on how to achieve practical results…rather than seeing processes as ends in themselves.

I was impressed at our last Board meeting by how many of you voiced that view. And I have no doubt that we can achieve this.

We can and we must work together to monitor together and to show results together.

We can best achieve results through issue-specific “groupings of agencies,” so that we come together when and where relevant… and rely on each other’s strengths…as the H5 does on maternal health… or UNICEF and UNESCO do on education. UN coordinating mechanisms can and must be flexible, light, and country-specific in managing a results-based, accountable approach.

As Busan and the preparations for Rio+20 show, the development landscape is changing. Deliver as One can and must demonstrate and advance the relevance of the UN system in this new setting. UNICEF is committed to doing our part as we Deliver as One for children.

Addressing this new landscape, the Secretary General has called for establishing Sustainable Development Goals that build on the MDGs –and “lay the foundations for dynamic economic growth, respect for the planet, and social equity.”
To support his vision, we believe it’s not enough simply to argue that, in principle, children must be at the heart of what sustainable development produces -- although that is, indeed, an important principle. We need to show how placing children and equity at the heart of sustainable development is also a good investment… in practice.

Nobody has a greater stake in sustainable growth than children. If growth is not sustained…the next generation will not benefit from its fruits.

Conversely, we need to show how children and the most disadvantaged not only must benefit from growth, but also can contribute to it. There is mounting evidence to suggest that investing in the social sectors and in children equitably -- especially in their health and their education -- breaks the intergenerational transmission of poverty…creates more stable societies…and contributes to sustainable growth.

A recent IMF staff discussion note shows that as societies become more equitable, economic growth is more sustainable over time. In fact, it found that a 10 percentile decrease in inequality increases the expected length of a growth spell by 50 per cent.

Investing -- I repeat investing -- in people…in their health and in their education… is a vital part of making development sustainable.

Consider these returns on investment.

Just one extra year of schooling for girls can increase their future wages by between 10 to 20 per cent -- wages which they, more than boys, reinvest back into their families, kick-starting a cycle of opportunity and prosperity.
It is estimated that immunization is one of the most cost-effective childhood health interventions. If we scale up the use of five existing vaccines (Pneumococcal, Rotavirus, HaemophiilusInfluenzae B, Measles, and Pertussis), and introduce a Malaria vaccine, we would over the next 10 years save 6.4 million lives, and avert $6.4 billion in treatment costs, plus avert $145 billion in productivity losses.

And the World Bank estimates that investing in nutrition can increase a country’s GDP by at least 2-3 per cent. Some of the highest economic returns come from nutrition interventions such as vitamin A supplements…where the return on investment can be as high as US$100 for every dollar invested. Given the impact of nutrition on health, well-being and development, UNICEF is redoubling our efforts at both global and country level to reduce under-nutrition and stunting.

At the heart of sustainable growth is child survival. And while lowering child mortality has long been a moral imperative…increasingly, it’s an economic one as well.

Progress on child survival has been remarkable. That is due to decades of sustained global efforts like the World Summit for Children twenty two years ago… the UN resolution on A World Fit for Children ten years ago…and the inspiration and discipline of the MDGs.
To commemorate these anniversaries and invigorate further progress, UNICEF will join USAID, WHO, and othersto help lead next week’s Child Survival Call to Action in Washington D.C. Co-convened by the governments of Ethiopia, India, and the United States, the conference will work to unite the child survival community for a new chapter in the global effort to end preventable child deaths -- in part by addressing the fact that much of our progress in the past has been inequitable.

A Promise Renewed -- a global initiative to be launched at the Child Survival Call to Action conference -- will seek to renew the global commitment to child survival. In doing so, it will add impetus to the Secretary General’s Every Woman, Every Child movement. We will ask all governments everywhere to sign a pledge that renews their commitment to accelerating progress on newborn, child and maternal survival -- and we will work together with those governments and our partners to monitor progress.

How better could the world put into practice the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Realising these new child survival targets will require investments not only in health, but in many sectors: education... sanitation... water... and more.

So, I hope that by the time we meet in September, all government leaders and many members of civil society and the private sector will have renewed their commitment to helping the youngest children survive and thrive.

Nowhere is child survival more urgent than in emergency situations. And among the most urgent of those is the Sahel. The situation is dire. And it’s deteriorating.
Across the region, more than one million children are at risk of, or already suffering from, severe acute malnutrition. Weakened from lack of nutrition, they’re vulnerable to diseases, lost schooling, and threats of exploitation and abuse. We’re working with partners to set up hundreds of health and nutrition centres. In Chad alone, we are supporting 285 feeding centres – with plans to support 183 more in the next six months.

We’re hard at work. But there’s so much more to do for the families fighting to find food, stay alive, and protect their children -- families that deserve more than our charity; they deserve our admiration for their bravery, and support for their struggle.

To reinvigorate interest and combat donor fatigue… to reach new audiences… and to raise awareness of the crisis, together with the National Committees, we’re leveraging our presence on social media.

And at the same time, we’re addressing continuing emergencies in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, the DRC, Pakistan, and Syria. The severe acute malnutrition rates in Yemen -- affecting nearly 270,000 young children -- are almost the same as they were at the height of the crisis in Somalia last year.

Yet support for us and all our partners at the UN and beyond is lagging far behind the need. This can be explained in part by global financial uncertainties.
But while some governments are reducing their Official Development Aid and contributions to emergencies due to global financial challenges, many people are not. I saw this during my visit, last month, to France and Spain. Despite economic pressures, contributions from French and Spanish citizens have been growing …suggesting that when difficulties in their own lives increase, so their empathy for others increases. A wonderful tribute to their humanity.

As we continue to press for the funds that can save so many millions of children who are suffering, let me take a moment to address one aspect of how we must do so.

We must not use images of dead or dying children in our campaigns, because it’s exploitative. Children one day old have the same right to privacy that we would want if we or our children were dying. Furthermore…I believe that in the long run, it doesn’t work. Over time, people become inured to harrowing images. Shocking pictures no longer shock. Surely, the public is more responsive to pictures of recovering children…children who have the hope of a future as well as hopes for the future -- thanks to the work of UNICEF and so many others.

Just as we harness practice to principle throughout our work, so we must conduct our practices in a principled way.

The generous responses we’ve received from the National Committees in not only France and Spain but Japan, Italy, the UK, the US and the Netherlands, amongst many others, are not only a tribute to the empathy of those citizens…they should be a reminder to governments that their publics support helping children even in tough economic times.
Regardless of the financial climate, we must all keep investing in children…investing in the social sector…and investing in a sustainable future for all. And we must extend the progress from which so many children have benefitted… to those who have been left behind. All too often the girls. And so at the heart of our refocus on equity is the principle of gender equality. We must always put it into practice not only within UNICEF, but in all our advocacy and programmes.

In May 2010, UNICEF updated our policy on gender equality and began implementing the three year Strategic Priority Action Plan…including hiring our new Principal Advisor on Gender and Rights, Anju Malhotra.

The Action Plan has resulted in an increase in staff knowledge and understanding, as well as a growth in gender-focused programme activities in regions and sectors.

However, gaps remain and new challenges are emerging. Going forward, we’ll strive ever harder to better integrate gender into our programmes and partnerships.

Gender equality is just one priority in the equity agenda…as is reaching children with disabilities…as is reaching into indigenous communities…or mapping and reaching the most disadvantaged urban as well as rural children.

As we do so, and especially in areas of innovation, if we are to put the principle of equity into practice effectively, we need to know what’s working and what isn’t.
MoRES will help us do so. You’ll remember that at our last two board meetings we have spoken about MoRES -- our new Monitoring of Results for Equity System. And let me note, again, how encouraged we have been by your support.

Much work on MoRES has already been carried out at all levels, and we’re making good progress. Already, 26 country offices are using it, and many others are moving forward. And in humanitarian situations, we are getting better at tracking our results in real time.

As MoRES evolves, we’re learning from our mistakes and sharing our successes. We hope that other members of the UN family will join us and claim their ownership. And we’re working to develop it with those who matter most -- our host governments.

As with any innovation, even as we roll it out, we must adjust itas we re-purpose and reinvent new technologies. For example, while MoRES will be transforming how quickly we can measure results through measuring bottlenecks every six months... recently, I saw in Uganda a way of supplementing MoRES with even more rapid reporting.

U-Report, recently developed by UNICEF Uganda, is a new way of using SMS technology. It both engages youth in reporting on conditions in their own communities, and helps us receive data faster about our programmes.

While I was there in April, we texted a question to 107,000 U-reporters: “What food should be given to a baby under six months of age?”
Within 24 hours, we had received over 23,000 responses. A quick analysis of 2,000 responses showed that 69 per cent of respondents gave the correct answer: breast milk. It also showed that awareness of exclusive breastfeeding was lowest in the South and West of the country, pinpointing where we might focus greater attention.

The excitement of our people in Uganda about this and other innovations was palpable.

I wished more of my colleagues here in New York could have been there, because in a mission driven organization like ours, it is especially important for staff to see the results of their work. The work of staff at headquarters, who support the field, is as important to our mission as someone who is in a community saving a child’s life.

That is not to say that those on the front line are not without their challenges -- personal security being the greatest of these -- and I want to reemphasize our commitment to the safety of all our staff everywhere, national and international alike.

Let me turn now, briefly, to our internal Oversight functions.

In previous Board sessions, I have argued for greater transparency in principle and, specifically, with regard to internal audit reports.

Let me cite one recent example of practical benefits of transparency.
Just last week, our Supply Division concluded our tender for bed nets for the next 12 months. Because they are now able to make demand projections transparent to industry…because they can be transparent about pricing, they secured a price decrease of over 20 per cent. This means that UNICEF and governments will save approximately $22 million during the next year.

And let me summarize why applying this principle to our internal audit makes sense.

First, because it would mean greater accountability -- to our donors…to partner governments…and to the publics which properly and increasingly demand it.

Second, external transparency encourages greater internal transparency and accountability.

And third, because greater transparency will bring us into line with the best practices of many national audit offices.

And let me assure you that we’re committed to making sure that we will protect the privacy of the individuals, the sovereignty of governments, and -- always -- the integrity and quality of our internal audit reports.

Thanks to the Board, and the good work of David Kanja, we’ve made significant strides to date. I hope that at this board meeting we can reach agreement on the natural next step: posting all internal audit reports on our website -- with the proper safeguards.
The reports before you on ethics and evaluations also show progress – together with significant challenges.

Under the leadership of Mary Roodkowsky, you’ll see that requests for advice on ethics issues are up significantly. And there’s been more rapid compliance with the financial disclosure programme.

In the Evaluation report, thanks to the efforts of Colin Kirk and his colleagues, you’ll read not only of progress but of plans to strengthen our commitment to cost-effectiveness and results. This year we’ll carry out a comprehensive review of the current evaluation policy and its implementation. In particular, we’re looking to improve the quality of evaluations… the speed at which management responds with clear action plans…and how we follow through on those action plans.

Even at a time of continued fiscal pressure, I intend to maintain at least the current level of funding for the evaluations that can help us improve and innovate.

And although it doesn’t yet have a report to call its own, this seems a good place to update you on VISION in its first few months of life.

The foundation of VISION is strong. That is the result of a huge amount of work not only here in New York but in all of our offices around the world. This has been a tremendous organizational challenge. It’s not over yet. Glitches remain. But we will persist, because it will make UNICEF more efficient and more focused. For example, by consolidating transactions, we’ll free up more staff to work on programmes that improve children’s lives.
In this, in all that we do, we must measure ourselves by one standard -- whether we are improving children’s lives as efficiently as possible. We must be ever more cost-effective with the precious resources that enable us to do that. In everything we do.

To that end, Nicolas Pron has discussed with the Bureau, and our President has discussed with me, how we can make board meetings more efficient. Not for efficiency as an end in itself, but for the children. Our guiding principle -- the best interests of the child -- is hardly served, for example, by the cost of publishing material for Board sessions.

Every page for this Board meeting costs between $950 and $2,355. One single page of my Annual Report to you, as well as of the Audit, Ethics, Evaluation, and Gender reports, costs $2,355. One single page, $2,355.

Here are some examples of what $2,355 could buy:

- 7,850 doses of measles vaccine;
- 18,115 doses of oral polio vaccine;
- 30,000 sachets of oral rehydration salts.

How many children’s lives would be saved by those commodities? By one less page?

We predict that the cost of publishing materials for the September session will be just over $850,000 -- almost one million dollars! Please, in the coming months, let us discuss environmentally sound and economically sustainable alternatives to our current practices.
I am not suggesting that we reduce the number of languages. But I am suggesting that we consider shorter reports…more e-communications…more concise, focussed, necessary questions and answers…and the schedule and duration of our meetings.

I raise this topic, which I know, like the issue of greater transparency, could be controversial in some of its details, out of my ever growing appreciation and confidence in the quality of our discussions.

Because I will confess that two years ago, as I approached my first Annual meeting, I didn’t know what to expect. I was more curious than confident about the character of our discussions.

So, I was pleased as I prepared for this meeting, to realize I was looking forward to our discussions…

…because of the support, sometimes critical but always constructive, that you’ve consistently offered…

…because of all I’ve learned from our meetings…

…and because of our common focus on both the rights of children and on achieving results as we protect those rights.

That is what unites us: giving children everywhere a better, safer, healthier, and happier start in life.

Thank you, once again, for all you do in that common cause.