I’d like to speak today about rights and results.

Why rights? Because our mandate — our mission — is the promotion of children’s rights. And by extension, the rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights are the foundation of our efforts, generation after generation, to construct a more civilized world.

And why results? Because without results, our expressions of dedication to these rights becomes mere rhetoric. And worse — a failure to produce results can mean not only a loss of faith in the institutions founded as an expression of human rights… but in the rights themselves.

Yes, we bring rights to life through our references to such vital documents as the UN Charter or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But we bring them to life primarily through policies and persistent commitment… through strategic investments… through practical actions.
Without these actions — and the results they achieve — the rights enshrined in conventions and declarations, or loudly defended in world capitals and at the UN, amount to little more than words on paper…or worse, hypocrisy.

Verbally, of course, we must always stand up for human rights — and never stand by when they are grossly violated.

But we best serve those rights not through speeches — nor certainly by scolding — but by achieving results on the ground.

And to do so everywhere. In every country — least-developed, middle-income, high-income, everywhere. One reason why this week’s discussion on UNICEF’s evolving relationship with middle and high-income countries is so important. For rights are universal. They belong to every person. And it is the responsibility of every government, with the support of the UN and partners, to uphold them.

After all, human rights are not only political — but economic and social, as well. They are tied, ultimately, to demonstrably better lives for all citizens. Every child, every woman, every man has the right to an equitable, fair chance at a better life in all its dimensions.
So a boy’s right to health must be reflected in his ability to access immunizations, medical care and nutrition. A girl’s right to an education must be reflected in her ability to attend school, supported by a quality curriculum — and girl-friendly sanitation facilities. And every child’s right to safety must be reflected in her ability to be protected and cared for in the midst of a crisis.

However, governments worldwide…the United Nations…UNICEF…all of us…must confront an uneasy truth: the gap between rights proclaimed and what people around the world actually see in their daily lives is wide, and in too many areas, growing wider every year.

Indeed, those nations which consider themselves to be the strongest champions of human rights have an additional responsibility to reduce injustices and inequalities in their own societies. When they fail to do so — when growing numbers of their citizens lose hope in a better future for their children — they turn more easily to the politics of anger and division. To a denial of the rights for others that they see denied for themselves in their daily lives.
Our world has become more chaotic and brutal than at any time since the Second World War. Conflicts. A degraded climate. Inequalities. Emergencies that send millions fleeing their homes and homelands in search of safety. Violation after violation of fundamental rights — on paper and in practice.

And no part of humanity pays a dearer cost for these failures than children.

Children kept from the health care they need because they live in hard-to-reach communities…because they are poor…because they live with disabilities…or because of systemic prejudice, intolerance or gender bias.

Children missing out on the quality education enjoyed by their wealthier peers, giving them less of a chance as adults — thus producing vicious, intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Children missing out on key vaccinations, or dying from malaria or diarrhoea — millions every year. Adolescents whose mortality rate from HIV/AIDS is a global scandal.
Children whose families are dreading the next flood, tsunami or drought to strike their neighborhoods — or who are living under the deadly shadow of conflict.

Children who are fleeing these conflicts, spilling over borders in search of safe haven — an urgent and growing global issue we must address through the two upcoming summits on refugees and migrants.

Each failure…each child living without hope…each life cut short…each future dimmed because of a lack of will to brighten it…is more than an individual tragedy — although that is reason enough for us to act.

It also can result in a loss of faith. A loss of faith in governments and political leadership…in the international institutions developed in that great burst of hopeful creativity in the aftermath of World War II, including the UN itself…and most alarmingly, a loss of faith in the values that all of us cherish. The values enshrined in the UN Charter.
For isn’t the rhetoric of equal rights denied by the reality of the inequalities that mark so many societies — the widening gulf between the “haves” and “have nots?” Is it any wonder that respect for rights is so undermined when people see them denied in so many ways? When the values of tolerance and acceptance are undermined by blinkered interpretations of religion and appeals to raw nationalism that leave no room for differing beliefs or points of view? When the values of international co-operation and mutual responsibility are eroded by isolationism, and narrow avenues of thought that turn a blind eye to the plight of neighbours and people living in distant lands alike? By heated — and polarizing — rhetoric that pits citizen against citizen…and nation against nation?

This is, admittedly, an alarming diagnosis. But that is not a reason to lose our optimism…to fall into a self-fulfilling pessimism.

After all, look at the wonderful progress achieved in recent decades: more children than ever before are surviving their fifth birthdays… more are receiving an education…more are getting the nutrition they need.
Look for example at the growing global movements and broad partnerships dedicated to combatting undernutrition — the SUN movement; to educating and healing children in crises — Education Cannot Wait and No Lost Generation; or to addressing the threat of violence faced by children in every society — the End Violence partnership.

Year by year, together with partners in government, the private sector, NGOs and civil society, we’re building a legacy of lives improved. Lives protected. Lives saved. We cannot help but be inspired by these results.

Moreover, if the world is able to summon the same spirit of practical hope — the creativity — that changed the world 70 years ago, we can help citizens of every society see the kind of progress reflected in their lives they need to see. We can demonstrate — not through words, but through results — that a better world is possible. The kind of results reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

So today, I’d like to briefly discuss with you the only sustainable path forward to a restoration of faith not only in global institutions but also in the values that have shaped them — the path of an unrelenting focus on achieving practical results. On unrelenting progress in pursuit of Agenda 2030. Results that people in every society, and in every community, can see around them.
Our achieving these results requires looking within ourselves, at the UN and at UNICEF — how we work as organizations...and how we collaborate with one another. To become more efficient, focused and strategic in our approach to resources: how we invest them and how we target them to reach the most vulnerable.

Efficiency, coherence and resources — all immutably interrelated. Because when we improve efficiency and coherence, we achieve effective and better results. When we achieve better results, our generous donors have an incentive to increase resources. And when we increase our resources, we’re able to invest in more programmes to achieve more results for more people. A virtuous cycle.

There is no better time to make these efforts. As we support governments as they pursue their SDG commitments. As we contend with a world of spiraling emergencies that stretch our capacity to respond to them. And as the UN updates its reform efforts through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review — the QCPR. Let me focus on this for a moment, as Member States focus on it in the coming weeks.
The current QCPR has already provided an important step forward in improving our processes and co-ordination: for example, by simplifying our programming to focus on common goals and budget frameworks…by more closely aligning our strategic plans…and through the establishment of the Standard Operating Procedures and Results Groups.

But we must do more. The new QCPR provides an important opportunity to show that our work on processes is about achieving practical progress. And measuring and judging our success by results achieved for every person, in every community. Procedural reforms are not ends in themselves. Like the UN’s many meetings, conferences and commissions, our reforms must be judged by the results they can achieve.

In July, UNICEF presented some practical suggestions at an ECOSOC meeting in July for the new QCPR. A list of these suggestions will be available on PaperSmart tomorrow. But just to list a few:

Adopting an online, real-time information system shared by all UN agencies that integrates the short and long-term needs of communities — one supported by a common and flexible situation analysis aimed at resilient development.
Or bringing together better and more **disaggregated data from across the UN system** as we prepare to measure progress towards the SDGs, and help governments monitor programmes and policies aimed at delivering services to the most marginalized children. Especially data that goes beyond strictly economic factors like average *per capita* income, which can mask vulnerabilities across communities and indeed, countries.

Or institutionalizing **SDG Results Groups** within six months of the new QCPR, in which all UN Country Teams support national governments in a coherent way with joint planning and results measurements, and simplified processes. I might note that, already in 2015, UNICEF has participated in 762 Results Groups in 123 countries, leading or co-leading one third of them.

Another practical measure could be establishing more **pooled funds** that can be strategically invested in programmes that will have the quickest, most direct impact in communities. Such funds must not, of course, replace agency-specific funding, for that would greatly reduce our collective funding.
Or using **flexible funding** across both development and humanitarian activities — and developing donor incentives to help us do so. For example: cash transfers in humanitarian action, not only as short-term support for families living through a crisis, but as a means to strengthen social safety nets for the future. Flexible funding was one of the commitments made through the World Humanitarian Summit’s Grand Bargain.

Or deepening the **coherence of our development and humanitarian co-ordination** on the ground to break down the artificial boxes separating those efforts, as we’ve discussed before.

Or looking at **innovative financing mechanisms** to mobilize additional resources for children, and to improve co-ordination with our partners’ efforts.

But let me emphasize an important point. We must not allow these co-operative efforts to erode the comparative advantages that make each agency uniquely valuable to governments and communities. Acting on our common purpose should not mean redundant conformity rather than co-ordination…or the heavy hand of new bureaucratic layers at the country or global level… or a single UN logo that would ultimately reduce the power of our individual voices and brands and thus, our funding and capacity as a whole.
Like any good football team, we must all play our positions. Pass the ball freely and welcome credit for an assist as much as for a goal.

And as we strengthen our focus on results among ourselves, we must also look inwards, within our own organization, to do the same.

Which is why we’ll continue exploring operational efficiencies throughout our organization. For effective results. From the establishment of the Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest…to the efficiencies being achieved by our Supply Division that I outlined in June…to our Human Resources efforts to reform recruitment, talent-management, and performance and evaluation…to our increasing focus on, and in investments in, country offices and results achieved in the field.

Which is also why our new Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 will be built not only around results, but the results represented by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

And which is why we’ll continue aligning everything we do as an organization around equity — to give every child every opportunity to live a healthy, protected and happy life, from the very start. That is the right of every child.
Seventy years ago, the world that emerged from the Second World War was a devastated one. Cities — and countries — were ruined. Economies were destroyed. Families were torn apart. And refugees fled their homelands in search of safety and opportunity elsewhere.

The UN emerged out of these ruins, not only as an organization that met the immediate needs of children — their health, their nutrition, and their welfare. But as an organization that promised a new, better world based on co-operation, not conflict…dialogue, not disaster…results, not ruin. San Francisco marked the creation of a great institution based on the values we cherish and must protect.

Today, the UN — like all institutions — is being challenged once again by the devastation around us.

And more. With every new headline, with every fresh outrage, with every new violation of human rights, the promises the world made in San Francisco — the values it proclaimed seven decades ago — are being challenged and undermined.
The antidote to growing global cynicism is the results we achieve together. Results that people everywhere, in every society, can see around them. Children protected from violence. A boy receiving the vaccination and nutrition he needs. A girl sitting in a classroom, her eyes lit with hope for her future — and the future of her society.

The consensus around the Sustainable Development Goals provides the best opportunity in decades to build practical hope by changing people’s lives for the better…and achieving real results and real progress for children, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized children.

Because as our agencies work with citizens and governments to achieve results through the SDGs, we do something more — we begin to restore faith that international co-operation and consensus works. That it is more than rhetoric. That equitable progress is not only necessary, but possible.

The kind of progress now being achieved by the quiet heroes all around us.
Heroes like UNICEF’s wonderful staff members in Aleppo or Afghanistan…in Yemen or Yambio or elsewhere — staying and delivering in the midst of conflict. Our colleagues working on the daily construction of resilient development around the world.

Or heroes like Italy’s Captain Francesco Iavazzo, who put his ship, himself and his crew at risk to save 562 refugees whose boat had capsized in the Mediterranean.

Or young heroes like the Syrian girl who lost her hands, but not her hope, and is waiting in Lebanon for a prosthesis so she can rebuild her life.

For her sake, and the sake of our values, we must not only help her get her new hands — but lend her, and all children, our own.

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