

**UNICEF Executive Board  
2022 second regular session  
6–8 September 2022**

Opening statement by the President of the Executive Board  
H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan Valverde  
Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

*(6 September 2022)*

Excellencies, Executive Director Catherine Russell, fellow Bureau members, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honoured to preside over the UNICEF Executive Board's second regular session of 2022.

As you may know, I was appointed a few days ago as the new Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations. Being the first-ever woman Permanent Representative of Costa Rica in New York, it is indeed a tremendous responsibility and honour that I intend to fulfil with dedication and collegiality. Costa Rica is honoured to preside over the governing body of this important United Nations organization and to support its unequivocal mandate to serve every child, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized, everywhere.

I am grateful to the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for its endorsement of my appointment as President of the UNICEF Executive Board for the remainder of the term that ends in December 2022.

I thank my predecessor, Ambassador Rodrigo Carazo, who led the work of the Executive Board through the end of June with great commitment, and Ambassador Michal Mlynár of Slovakia who temporarily took on this leadership since July.

My appointment is a testament to my country's commitment to the well-being and rights of the children of Costa Rica and worldwide, and to supporting and strengthening the work that UNICEF performs around the globe. I look forward to continuing our work in a spirit of

collaboration, building on the impressive achievements made by the Board and passing on a legacy of principled and pragmatic actions to the membership of the Bureau for 2023.

We can proudly report on several advances this year: the consensual adoption of 17 decisions, including on the new UNICEF plan for global evaluations for 2022–2025; a total of 17 new country/multi-country programme documents; and the establishment of the Assistant-Secretary-General position (subsequently filled by a UNICEF leader, Mr. Ted Chaiban,) to head the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership.

We welcome the progress made by the Partnership, which has contributed to rising COVID-19 vaccination coverage across countries. We have recently heard that [an estimated] 60 per cent of world’s population has now been vaccinated against COVID-19, although strong equity gaps persist in countries that are most in need, including those dealing with humanitarian emergencies. We encourage UNICEF to continue its work with the support of Member States to address the diverse challenges that remain, not the least the recent data that show the largest decline in childhood vaccinations within and among countries over the past three decades.

During this session, we will look at UNICEF’s work in several areas, all of which will coalesce to strengthen its footprint on the ground and to bolster its capacity to tackle the multiple challenges faced by children and their families in many parts of the world.

We will consider 22 new country programme documents, the outcomes of joint efforts between UNICEF, the United Nations country teams and the respective Governments. Resilience and adolescent development, focusing on girls, will be the main theme of discussions around the new programme documents, which run the gamut from low-income to high-income countries. We will also review the extensions of 18 ongoing programmes of cooperation.

The Board will consider an update on oversight matters, specifically an overview of the organization’s audit and investigations work, and an assessment of the independence of that

Office. While the current context calls for more attention and scrutiny of oversight matters in general, it is important to remember that each United Nations organization has its own specificities and practices, and that one size should not fit all. The different informal and preparatory meetings recently held have demonstrated that oversight functions are at different stages of maturity, with different realities.

I am confident that our discussions during this session, as well as during the informal consultations on the draft decision, will take into consideration the situation of UNICEF...and that we need to maintain an optimal balance between investments in oversight matters and investments in programmes.

This week we will also review the UNICEF updated accountability system and highlights of the ongoing strategic efforts to improve the organization and the structures through which UNICEF assigns responsibility and enables accountability, all to better serve the needs of children and their families. The discussions around the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and updated financial estimates for 2022–2025 for the Strategic Plan will respectively focus on financing and the quality of funding, and the actual resource requirements that will allow the organization to achieve its strategic objectives.

On this matter, as the President of the UNICEF Board, but also as a representative of a country programme who has seen first-hand the results achieved through the key partnership between UNICEF and our Government throughout the years, I cannot sufficiently stress the need to support the UNICEF mandate by strengthening contributions of core, unearmarked resources. These funds will help UNICEF to innovate and to find creative solutions; to respond rapidly when disasters strike; to deliver at scale; and to build resilience among communities. Regular resources are the best-placed funds to support UNICEF in its implementation of its Strategic Plan and to contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In dire times, we must live up to our commitments and demonstrate leadership, in the spirit of solidarity and mutual support, for the benefit of the greatest number of children and families around the world.

I look forward to our important discussions on all these matters over the coming days and I sincerely thank you in advance for your constructive and active engagement, *for every child.*

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