

Agenda Item 2

Opening statement

Madam President, Madam Executive Director

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

First, let me join others in congratulating the new President of the Executive Board.

I would also like to reiterate our appreciation to UNICEF staff for their strong engagement to address the needs of children, including children on the move, particularly given the increasing challenges worldwide. We appreciate UNICEF's continued response to the consequences of the pandemic while stepping up efforts to address new needs, notably those deriving from the food crisis in Africa and the war in Ukraine.

We commend UNICEF's work on children's rights to education and your leading role in the Transforming Education Summit. We appreciate the events on Girls' Education and Education in Emergencies, two sectors which the EU is keen to support, as well as the event on Transforming Education in Africa.

We take note of updated income estimates linked to the current Strategic Plan, and in particular the projected increase of 15 per cent for 2022. Considering the current surge in humanitarian needs and the increase in commodity prices, we would like to know whether UNICEF considers that

such an increase will be sufficient to reach the programmatic targets and number of beneficiaries anticipated in its Strategic Plan in 2022.

We very much welcome the Review of the functions of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and the assessment of its independence. OIAI is a crucial tool to ensure transparency, integrity and accountability across all UNICEF operations. With the very significant increase of UNICEF work and the even bigger increase in the OIAI investigative caseload over the last years, it is paramount to ensure the Office's total independence and equip it with the tools and resources to perform a high quality job. In this respect, the report shows that the number of investigator posts, despite a significant increase, has not kept up with the increase of the investigative caseload. While we understand budgetary constraints, we encourage UNICEF to explore alternative funding models. We also support the suggestion to further strengthen the Office's independence, including through increased communication with the Executive Board.

To conclude, I wish to reaffirm the European Union's strong commitment to promote and protect the rights of the child. The EU is a key donor to UNICEF, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with you.

Thank you.