

### **Item 3 – General statement – 6 September 2022**

Excellencies, Colleagues, and Friends,

Thank you for giving me the floor. Today, we have jointly travelled and heard about children's situations across the globe through all statements delivered before me. On my side I would like to draw the attention to two interlinked areas:

1. The global hunger crisis, and,
2. The need to bring in a gender and age perspective in all our work

The figures of hunger are daunting:

- Globally, nearly 45 million children under the age of five are suffering from wasting.<sup>1</sup>
- Girls and women often eat **less** and **last** in countries facing conflict, famine and hunger.<sup>2</sup>

As poverty and a lack of access to livelihoods deepen, families increasingly resort to negative coping mechanisms, heightening girls' risk of:

- child, early and forced marriage and unions
- unintended pregnancy, dropping out of school
- child labour
- sexual exploitation and abuse

Given the global situation of hunger, Plan International has declared a red alert to address the catastrophic impact, significant damage and loss of lives. We are scaling up our response efforts in: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Somalia, and South Sudan. We do this via food distributions, cash and voucher assistance, school meals, malnutrition screening and nutrition supplementation among other interventions. We are looking forward to collaborating and developing more partnerships with UNICEF both at national and global level. Together we are stronger – and as many of you already know, we are also in areas that are difficult to reach.

Pre-existing gender inequalities are aggravated in *all* crises, not only hunger crises and adolescent girls' physical safety. Their health and their future prospects are all threatened in ways that differ from the risks faced by younger girls and boys, or by men, adolescent boys and adult women. Often, too, just because they are young and female, their rights and needs are ignored. They are often even invisible. We therefore need to adopt an age, gender and diversity approach to make sure that no one is left behind.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122032> ; <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*: <http://wps.unwomen.org/>

Plan International recognises that millions of girls are disproportionately disadvantaged in education, health, work and family life – particularly in the world’s poorest countries. When factors like poverty, ethnicity or disability intersect and where gender stereotyping and unequal power relations prevail, girls’ disadvantages are magnified.

We must change that and we need your political and financial support, as very eloquently and clearly outlined previously by ED Russell.

In addition to all those recommendations – I would like to share with you 4 areas that **adolescent girls living in crisis situations have outlined as their priorities and recommendations for change in any programmes or intervention.**

- **Participation:** Support involvement of girls on all issues that affect them and put their agency at the centre. *“We are not only vulnerable – we are strong, capable and innovative.”* This means providing safe spaces, forums and processes that involve and are led by adolescent girls and are sensitive to gender inequality and power dynamics
- **Education:** Ensure that girls’ education does not suffer
- **Health:** Agencies and donors must prioritise funding for the provision of adolescent girl-friendly information and services. Mental health issues and sexual and reproductive health rights need to be a core focus
- **Security:** Tackle gender-based violence in all its forms

**So, the question to the board is: how to make this a reality? How can the board take into account the views, lived experiences and recommendations from children and especially from girls? How can local voices of children in all their diversity resonate in all country programmes?**

We are looking forward to continuing the collaboration with UNICEF and the Executive board and together driving transformative and sustainable changes for children and particularly girls.

Thank you,

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Plan International