

Statement of H.E. the Ambassador at the presentation of the Country Programme Document by UNICEF Executive Board 6-8 September 2022

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving me the floor,

I take this opportunity to thank the UNICEF for convening the second regular session of its Executive Board today to enable the presentation of the Country program Document for Sri Lanka.

I must appreciate that the Regional Director Asia ,George Adjei and his team have taken considerable efforts in the the formulation of this document and have been good enough to share his thoughts with my delegation in the course of the several discussions we have engaged in.

It is a well known that Sri Lanka has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with UNICEF, spanning over a number of years. My delegation therefore looks forward to further consolidating this relationship as we engage with contemporary issues with a view to forging a common agenda for the future.

Over the past three decades, UNICEF has been working with the Sri Lankan government to strengthen the child protection system and has played a central role in policy formulation and strategic planning. It has also provided technical and financial support in this important role which has resulted in notable successes.

We also know that UNICEF partners with local and international entities to resource, invigorate and coordinate child protection services across the country with the objective of creating a strong, capable and coordinated response to ensure protective care and a safe environment for children:

We have observed that UNICEF also partners with civil society and local communities to change attitudes and norms surrounding issues such as corporal punishment and other harmful traditional practices in communities and schools. And across all areas, UNICEF helps to bolster advocacy and public engagement efforts to increase knowledge and understanding around the importance of protecting child rights. We are are grateful for those efforts.

It a matter of record that the UNICEF has engaged with the Sri Lanka Government stakeholders in the development of the Country Programme, in an endeavor to be in harmony with Sri Lanka's national development priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). We therefore take this opportunity to commend the important role played by the UNICEF not only in Sri Lanka but across more than 190 countries and territories, reaching out to the most disadvantaged children and adolescents.

Sri Lanka recalls with gratitude the valuable contribution UNICEF made during 30-year conflict which required humanitarian assistance, which partnership resulted in great success in the rehabilitation process of child soldiers whilst supporting child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality education and skills building, HIV prevention and treatment for mothers and babies, and the protection of children and adolescents from violence and exploitation.

This Country Program Report seeks to take cognizance of the development priorities of the Government of Sri Lanka in the present environment and those of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in an endeavor to ensure that no child is left behind consequent to an unprecedented time of stress the country has experienced largely as a result of global events and would sincerely hope that in this endeavor UNICEF will assist our people in the forms and means best suited for Sri Lanka.

We remain hopeful that the holistic, evidence-based and gender-responsive strategies adhered by the UNICEF will support Sri Lanka to remain resilient during this difficult period and open avenues for sustainable development in an endeavor to leave no child behind.

Sri Lanka would therefore wish to extend its commitment and support to collaborate with UNICEF in creating an enabling environment for the successful implementation of the CPD and for the achievement of the key objectives as envisaged.

I thank you once again