

## ADDRESS TO UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD – September 2022 meeting

Julia Siudek

I was asked to speak here because I was one of many young people who ran to the border crossings in my country, Poland, to support Ukrainian refugees.

I am here today in my capacity as a young person. I do not pretend to represent all young people, because we are all very different. But I believe that we as young people bring many positive things to society. We have a view of the world that is unspoiled by experience and untainted by limitations.

As young people we may not have much experience: we are just getting our education, building our skills, starting our first jobs, and making important decisions. But THIS makes our view of the world fresh and new. We are not yet discouraged by failures, AND we want to change what needs changing. We can contribute our strength and courage to achieve progress.

This is the feisty side of youth, but there is also the emotional one.

We feel an emotional need to respond to injustices in the world. That is why we take part in movements to address social injustices, racial inequalities, gender issues, and ending violence. We speak out on the climate catastrophe, we organize local cleanup actions and we share information on social media - because we worry about our future and the future of our Earth.

We take part in solidarity actions to help those in need, like people who are fleeing war, or are victims of natural disasters, or COVID. We are tired of feeling helpless when we see suffering of another human being. We speak out on sensitive issues—like mental health—and normalize reaching out for help - because we are saddened when we see our own health is not a priority for many people.

Young people have the power and desire to change the world. From you -- we need opportunities to be heard and get involved in policy and programming: in health, education, protection, social mobilization, and innovations. I would like to ask you to give us a chance. A chance to show our perspective, a chance to prove ourselves, and a chance to help YOU improve this world. A world we all share.