

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the First Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board, 2023**

**10 am – 1 pm, 7 February 2023**

I thank you, **Madam President**.

I warmly congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election.

**Madam Executive Director**, I thank you for sharing your vision; and I am happy to see that we share many of your priorities, especially for children in difficult situation, and those left furthest behind.

We commend the achievements of UNICEF in promoting and protecting the rights of children, including their access to education, healthcare and immunizations, safe water and sanitation, nutrition and protection from abuse and exploitation.

As the world confronts with multiple and complex interlinked crises, we are also facing a child rights emergency. Unfortunately, our response to this emergency does not adequately address the magnitude of the crisis.

**Madam President,**

With the limited time that we have, allow me to highlight a few reflections and priorities:

**First**, COVID has been a uniquely dis-equalizing crisis and its impact on education is a generational catastrophe. The children in the countries of the global south are the hardest hit due to lack of access to online education and

distance learning platforms. And negative coping strategies – including child labour and marriage – are mounting. Recovering from the learning loss is critically important to transform the education system to fit for purpose.

We would like to know from Madam Executive Director - What innovative approach does UNICEF have to ensure that all children have access to learning resources, including digital technology?

**Second**, we commend UNICEF's vital role in scaling up distribution of COVID vaccines through COVAX, especially its efforts to ensure vaccines equality in low-coverage African countries. However, we are deeply concerned that the pandemic leads to major backsliding on childhood vaccinations in three decades. UNICEF's programs for children, particularly routine immunization, must continue with the same level of urgency and scale.

We would like to know of your plans to mobilize resources for tackling the impacts of the pandemic on your regular services, while fulfilling your responsibilities with regard to distribution of COVID vaccines?

**Third**, the effects of climate change on children's health, development and well-being will become increasingly apparent. Meanwhile, the role of young people as a formidable force in driving change in attitudes, behaviors and policy concerning climate is likely to grow and become increasingly sophisticated.

How do you plan to ensure child-centered policies and programmes across all sectors in the fight against climate change?

I thank you all. I wish a very productive first session of the year.