

First regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board, 7–10 February 2023

**Opening statement by the President of the Executive Board
H.E. Ms. Marie-Louise Koch Wegter, Deputy Permanent Representative of
Denmark to the United Nations**

(7 February 2023 – as delivered)

Excellencies, fellow Bureau members, Executive Director Russell, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all to the first regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board for 2023. Let me just start by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the people of Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic after the dreadful earthquakes yesterday. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your people.

As we begin our work this year, we have great ambitions to continue to support and guide UNICEF in tackling the devastating impacts of disasters like this, of conflicts, climate change, infectious diseases, poverty and other challenges faced by children, adolescents and young people around the world, but also to build on the meaningful results that the organization continues to achieve year on year. I look forward to working with you, with this honourable Executive Board and with the Bureau, in guiding this great organization towards the best results for children.

It is a great pleasure for me to present my colleagues on the Bureau, the four Vice-Presidents: Excellencies María del Carmen Squeff (Argentina); Jonibek Hikmat (Tajikistan); Krzysztof Szczerski (Poland); and Claver Gatete (Rwanda). Thank you very much for taking on the responsibility to join me on the Bureau. Let me also thank my dear colleagues who presided over the work of the Board in 2022, which was skilfully led by Ambassadors Carazo and Chan Valverde of Costa Rica as Presidents,

and the other members of the Bureau, the Ambassador of Slovakia, who also served as President ad interim; the Ambassador of Ethiopia; and the Ambassador of Lebanon, as well as her successor to the Bureau.

Thank you also to Executive Director Catherine Russell, the Deputy Executive Directors and other UNICEF senior staff, who continue to steer the organization through a sea of global challenges, where the tides just seem to get higher by the day. A warm thank you to all the dedicated UNICEF staff members around the world for your tireless work with and for children. And finally, thank you to all members of the Executive Board for providing guidance, support and oversight to UNICEF. We all play each our small part in something big, namely, changing the life of children around the world. And the better we work together and the more conscious we are of spending our time and resources wisely, the more children we will help.

So without much further ado, distinguished colleagues, we have a full agenda to cover over the next few days. As we begin our deliberations, I would like to encourage all of us to work – as always – in a spirit of collaboration and partnership, keeping politics out of the boardroom, and keeping the well-being and needs of children at the forefront. For my part, I commit to presiding over the Executive Board in a spirit of openness and dialogue, and with a view to helping the Board complete its work as efficiently as possible without compromising on quality. I look forward to working with and learning from all of you during this session and over the course of the year.

Thank you very much.
