

Joint Statement
Executive Board of UNICEF
Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to
achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, Agenda Item 9
FIRST REGULAR SESSION 2023
8 February 2023, New York

Madam/Mister President

I make this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, the EU as a donor, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country, Germany.

We thank UNICEF for the presentation of the *Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan* which provides the Executive Board with an overview of its readiness to fulfil its ambitious goals.

We welcome that UNICEF has taken the initiative to reflect on its own capabilities to fulfil the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 right at the beginning, which encourages early learning and will allow the organization to take timely corrective action. We very much value this forward-looking approach.

We acknowledge that the formative evaluation includes unsatisfactory results and it is to be expected at this early stage of implementing the new Strategic Plan, especially considering the plan is highly ambitious. Nevertheless, we are note that many of the 19 strategic elements lack readiness, given the lack of convergence and insufficient use of evidence for decision-making. In particular, we emphasize the urgency with which key themes such as "risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming", "resilience", "climate action" and "peacebuilding" need to be addressed. We count on UNICEF to establish strong organizational foundations within the different existing departments for approaches in these fields.

In line with recommendations one, two and three, we support UNICEF in its work to take action to accelerate programmatic and organizational convergence, strengthen accountabilities, reduce competition and overcome internal silos to establish coherent and evidence-based programming.

We call on UNICEF to develop a strategic change management approach to meet the ambitions in the Strategic Plan. We also ask UNICEF to revisit and strengthen its business model, organizational culture and leadership, to among other issues address the persistence of hierarchical decision-making that currently seems to be a barrier to empowerment, engagement and agility, and to the current culture that can hinder partnerships with other UN entities or partner organisations.

As stated in recommendations seven and nine, we encourage UNICEF to focus more on developing a joined-up approach to data, research, evaluation and knowledge management to further improve the ways evidence is used to better enable decision-making.

We also encourage UNICEF to clarify the focus on climate action in accordance with recommendation 12. In addition to the areas identified in the evaluation we urge UNICEF to also strengthen focus on sustainable education, as creating increased awareness on climate

change prevention, mitigation and emergency preparedness through education is essential to enable children and their families to become part of the climate change solution.

In terms of funding, we note with concern the imbalance between goals and available resources. The Strategic Plan's value is in an amalgamation of pressing needs and realistic, achievable targets. In line with recommendation six, we encourage UNICEF to prepare better cost estimates for achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives and streamline funding processes that prioritize needs over historical funding volumes.

We commend UNICEF for its management response which fully supports all twelve recommendations and has already taken first steps towards corrective actions. However, we emphasize the importance of developing a more concrete action plan, that looks critically at whether the suggested actions will indeed lead to the desired results, and that can be monitored by the Executive Board.

We would like to close with 3 questions:

1. The evaluation mentioned that it will be important to ensure "sustained leadership modelling to change mindsets and drive behaviour changes required across organizational boundaries, structures and processes". The evaluation shows that as few as 14 percent of staff have actively worked in accordance with the new SP. How does UNICEF intend to work on the cultural changes that are required?
2. While implementing the recommendations, how will UNICEF encourage the sharing of best practices so Country Offices can learn from each other in these endeavours?
3. In addition to funding, how can we as the Executive Board support UNICEF in achieving its Strategic Plan?

We once again thank UNICEF and the evaluation office for undertaking this evaluability assessment and formative evaluation, which will help ensure that UNICEF can stay ahead of the curve and be fit for purpose in these challenging times, to contribute to accelerating achievements of the SDGs for every child.

Thank you.