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### Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2023

(7–9 February 2023)\*

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\* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the first regular, annual and second regular sessions of 2023, to be issued as parts I, II and III, respectively. These reports will be issued in final form as *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2023, Supplement No. 14 (E/2023/34/Rev.1–E/ICEF/2023/7/Rev.1)*.



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## **I. Organization of the session**

### **A. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work**

1. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work after the presentation of the document (E/ICEF/2023/1) by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

2. The Secretary announced that 46 observer delegations, including 1 intergovernmental organization, 1 international organization, 4 non-governmental organizations and 13 National Committees for UNICEF, had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.<sup>1</sup>

### **B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF**

3. The President welcomed the members and observers of the Executive Board to the first regular session of 2023. She expressed her condolences to the people of Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic following the recent earthquakes. She noted that as the Executive Board began its work in 2023, it had great ambitions to continue to support and guide UNICEF in tackling the devastating impacts of such disasters, as well as of conflicts, climate change, infectious diseases, poverty and other challenges faced by children, adolescents and young people around the world, and to build on the meaningful results that the organization continued to achieve year on year. She said that she looked forward to working with the Executive Board and with the Bureau in guiding UNICEF towards achieving results for children.

4. The President presented the other members of the Bureau and thanked them for taking on the responsibility of joining her on the Bureau. She also expressed her gratitude to the members of the Bureau in 2022.

5. The President thanked the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors and other UNICEF senior staff, who continued to steer the organization through a sea of global challenges, where the tides seemed to get higher by the day. She also thanked the dedicated UNICEF staff members around the world for their tireless work with and for children, and the members of the Executive Board for providing guidance, support and oversight to UNICEF.

6. The President emphasized that everyone present at the session played a small part in something big, namely, changing the life of children around the world. She encouraged everyone 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. She committed to presiding over the Executive Board in a spirit of openness and dialogue, with a view to helping the Board complete its work as efficiently as possible without compromising on quality. She also looked forward to working with and learning from everyone during the session and over the course of the year.

7. The Executive Director expressed her heartfelt condolences to the people of Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic following the recent earthquakes. She reported that funds had been allocated from the Emergency Programme Fund, that the National Committees had been requested to mobilize resources, and that UNICEF was

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<sup>1</sup> The final number of observer delegations was 51 and the final number of non-governmental organizations was 5, including the credentials submitted during the session, after the announcement by the Secretary.

preparing essential supplies for early dispatch and coordinating its efforts with partners.

8. Over the past year, UNICEF had delivered significant results in humanitarian action. The organization had maintained its leadership in COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator to promote vaccine equity. UNICEF continued to play a leading role in tackling the global learning crisis and had worked with countries to secure national statements of commitment following the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

9. To support the millions of people facing severe food insecurity, including 27 million children under the age of 5, and to expand its action for early prevention, detection and treatment, UNICEF had launched the No Time to Waste initiative. A new programme strategy for adolescent girls had been developed, and would shape how UNICEF country programmes aligned their interventions. Work on social protection had grown to better meet the challenges presented by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, conflict and climate change. And UNICEF had recently adopted its first-ever disability inclusion policy and strategy.

10. UNICEF had continued to critically review its operations. The organization remained a driver of United Nations reform and had worked with United Nations country teams to provide countries with resources and support. UNICEF had taken steps to strengthen organizational oversight, including by creating a dedicated investigations team in the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, undertaking proactive reviews in areas of high risk and appointing a Chief Risk Officer.

11. Work on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse had been furthered. The Executive Director appealed for additional resources for those critical programmes, which engaged communities, provided systems for children and adults to safely report exploitation and abuse, and helped survivors to access services. She reported that the organization's commitment to strengthening its internal culture had deepened, with the Our Core Values campaign already paying dividends.

12. The year 2023 was expected to bring further entrenchment of existing crises. The 2023 SDG Summit in September would provide an opportunity for the international community to accelerate progress towards meeting the 2030 goals. As the custodian for children in the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF was raising awareness, taking action and holding decision makers accountable for progress. The organization was calling on Governments to put children at the heart of pandemic recovery planning. UNICEF was committed to reach the most vulnerable children. UNICEF would seize the opportunity of the UN 2023 Water Conference in March to advocate for accelerated action and concrete commitments to water, sanitation and hygiene.

13. The Executive Director emphasized the need for UNICEF and its implementing partners to have the right support to deliver programmes for children where they were most needed, through the provision of timely, predictable and flexible funding.

14. The President opened the floor for general statements.

15. Delegations expressed gratitude to the Executive Director for her leadership as UNICEF continued to chart an ambitious course to address crises and challenges that affected children around the world. Several delegations also expressed their condolences to the people of Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic for the loss of thousands of lives, including scores of children, as a result of the recent earthquakes. They expressed appreciation for the emergency actions taken by UNICEF to support distressed people in the affected areas. Delegations also congratulated the President

of the Executive Board and assured her of their support and constructive engagement as she stepped into her important role. In addition, they expressed gratitude to her predecessor and the other members of the Bureau in 2022 for their excellent stewardship of the Board.

16. A group of delegations commended the continued response by UNICEF to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the procurement and delivery of vaccines, while addressing new challenges such as the food security crisis in the Horn of Africa, the war in Ukraine and the global learning crisis. The group said that the exceptional circumstances in the world today threatened to undermine the well-being, health and development of children and required leveraging the enormous strength of UNICEF and the entire United Nations system. The group also expressed its appreciation to UNICEF staff for their efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all children.

17. Another group of delegations underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic had slowed progress made in Africa on Sustainable Development Goal 4 – quality of education – and called for meaningful action and greater resources to help countries on the continent with learning recovery plans. The group called for additional financial resources for UNICEF initiatives such as Giga, which aimed to connect schools online in order to close the current technology gap, and expressed appreciation for UNICEF efforts focused on early childhood development and nutrition.

18. A delegation highlighted that children in the countries of the Global South had been the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic due to lack of access to online education and distance learning platforms, which had resulted in mounting negative coping strategies including child labour and marriage. The delegation asked about the innovative approaches that UNICEF was pursuing to ensure that all children had access to learning resources including digital technology. In response, the Executive Director said that digital initiatives were a priority for UNICEF, and that work was ongoing to get countries universally providing online access to children. UNICEF considered such work a critical endeavour and was committed to continuing efforts in that regard.

19. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its role in scaling up distribution of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility, and emphasized that programmes for children, particularly routine immunizations, must continue with the same level of urgency and scale. Asked about plans to mobilize resources for tackling the impacts of the pandemic while fulfilling vaccine distribution responsibilities, the Executive Director said that UNICEF was working with the World Health Organization and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to develop a recovery and acceleration plan to reach “zero-dose” children, as well as with Governments to roll out those plans.

20. Several delegations underscored that as the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development approached, the world was off-track in achieving those goals and faced the reality of children being increasingly affected by climate change, conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, poverty and food insecurity. UNICEF work on the ground played a crucial role in safeguarding the well-being of children, but more must be done to strengthen resilience against future shocks and to ensure sustainable, equitable and inclusive recovery. Recognizing all of the challenges that children faced, the Executive Director said that there was indeed some catching up to do, as well as acceleration, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Helping countries to make progress in that regard continued to be a priority for UNICEF. In terms of resiliency, she said that the work UNICEF did on the ground in communities helped countries to prepare for future shocks.

21. A delegation highlighted that the principles of transparency, accountability, oversight and efficiency, including as they related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, were at the heart of thoughtful results-orientated programme delivery. The delegation called on UNICEF and the Executive Board to continue prioritizing those principles and to identify ways to strengthen the effectiveness of efforts. A group of delegations said that metrics and indicators were a fundamental tool to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and welcomed the inter-agency coordination on the matter. The group also expressed strong support for work by UNICEF to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence in emergencies. The Executive Director stressed that UNICEF took protection from sexual exploitation and abuse very seriously because it was a horrific thing that happened to children and women in many places, and said that the organization was committed to doing its best to address the issue and accelerate work in that space.

22. A delegation drew attention to the document titled “Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025” (E/ICEF/2023/3), and said that UNICEF staff members were insufficiently well versed in the Plan and that many personnel, specifically at the country level, believed that the Plan was too broad and could not be genuinely implemented. Despite what had been declared in the Plan, namely, a transition by UNICEF to an intersectional approach to inequality and discrimination, the organization did not have clarity with respect to that notion or the tools for its implementation. The delegation also said that it had taken note of the development of an action plan for climate change, but that climate was not an established area of expertise for UNICEF and that expanding work in that area was counterproductive. In response, the Executive Director said that UNICEF was very committed to ensuring that the Strategic Plan was adopted, embraced and understood by the entire organization. Regarding the comment about climate, she said that UNICEF saw the impact of climate on the communities it worked with on the ground, and especially on children, who were more susceptible to the effects of climate change. It was important to ensure that UNICEF was doing everything it could within the bounds of its mandate to help communities adjust to the effects of issues such as heat and air pollution.

23. A delegation emphasized that there was a need to invest more in social protection systems, recovery from learning losses, and increased support to UNICEF and partners, especially through the provision of timely and flexible funding. Other delegations highlighted the decline of core resources faced by UNICEF, and expressed hope that UNICEF would diversify its funding sources and strengthen cooperation with international financial institutions and other stakeholders, in line with the objectives of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. A delegation called on developed countries to fulfil their official development assistance commitments by providing UNICEF with adequate and predictable core resources. Another delegation welcomed the commitment of Member States to raising core resources to at least 30 per cent by 2023, and called for its full implementation. The Executive Director said that much of the funding that UNICEF received, while appreciated, was earmarked for specific things, which could be challenging. Country programmes, for instance, relied on flexible funding, and having some flexibility in the funding made the organization’s work to help children easier.

24. A delegation expressed appreciation for efforts by UNICEF to broaden funding sources by implementing the Innovative Financing for Children Vision and Strategy to develop new initiatives with private partners. It also emphasized the importance of risk management and oversight of activities, and requested that UNICEF ensure that an adequate governance structure was in place to realize the streamlined processes for such initiatives, as well as the transparent screening of private partners. The Executive

Director agreed that private partnerships were critical to the work done by UNICEF and said that innovative funding and partnerships were being continuously explored.

### **C. Election of officers of the Executive Board**

25. For the year 2023, the Executive Board elected as President the Deputy Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Marie-Louise Koch Wegter, and as Vice-Presidents: the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Argentina, María del Carmen Squeff; Tajikistan, Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat; Poland, Krzysztof Maria Szczerski; and Rwanda, Claver Gatete.

## **II. Deliberations of the Executive Board**

### **A. UNICEF programme cooperation**

#### **(a) Country programme documents**

26. The country programme documents (CPDs) for Algeria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Central African Republic, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.2](#) to [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.10](#) and [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.12](#) to [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.14](#)); the common country programme document for Cabo Verde ([DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1](#)); the multi-country programme document for Pacific Island countries ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.1](#)); and the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.11](#)) were considered by the Board.

27. In brief introductory remarks, the Director, Programme Group, said that more than 2 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water and sanitation and basic hand-washing facilities. A huge acceleration of progress was needed, but the climate crisis was hampering efforts. The Director ad interim, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction, outlined the overall approach of UNICEF to water and sanitation challenges. Calling on Member States to strengthen WASH systems, he said that UNICEF would use the UN 2023 Water Conference in March to advocate for WASH services that closed the gaps to the unreached. That echoed remarks made by the Executive Director at the start of the session, and which were reiterated in a photo loop shown during the presentation of the agenda item.

28. A panel discussion involving speakers from Government, the United Nations, youth and academia focused on the urgency of action to realize the human right to water and sanitation in the climate crisis. The floor was then given to the Member States and to the UNICEF Regional Directors. Several representatives of the programme document-presenting countries took the floor, expressing their appreciation for UNICEF cooperation, with several commending the consultative process of developing the documents and their alignment with national priorities.

29. The UNICEF Regional Directors from the East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and West and Central Africa regions thanked the representatives of the CPD-presenting countries for their collaboration. The Regional Directors expressed UNICEF commitment to implementation of the programmes in support of national priorities and in pursuit of global goals, highlighting the challenges of the different country contexts that the programmes would seek to mitigate and address.

30. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/1 on a no-objection basis (see annex).

31. Following the adoption of the decision, a group of delegations expressed concerns about the CPD for the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2023–2027, and urged close work between the resident coordinators and country teams to develop CPDs that protected children and youth, especially girls and young women. Another delegation urged United Nations agencies to continue attempts to articulate in the CPDs their contributions to gender equality and respect and promotion of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.

32. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed concerns that discussions on the CPD had been politicized. He affirmed that the joint programme between the Government and UNICEF aligned with national development plans and had been prepared according to the needs and priorities of Iranian children. A delegation expressed its full support for the CPD for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

33. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Board had been informed of the six-month extension of the country programme for Papua New Guinea, following a six-month extension; and the 10-month extension of the country programme for Mauritania, following a two-month extension, as presented in document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.15](#).

34. The Executive Board was requested to approve the 10-month extension of the country programme for Brazil, following a one-year extension and a two-month extension; the 10-month extension of the country programme for the Gambia, following a one-year extension and a two-month extension; and the 10-month extension of the country programme for Afghanistan, following a two-year extension, a three-month extension and an 11-month extension, as presented in document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.15](#).

35. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/2 under agenda item 16 (see annex).

**B. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the forty-ninth and fiftieth Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings**

36. The Associate Director, HIV/AIDS, Programme Group, presented the oral report (UNICEF/2023/EB/2).

37. Three delegations complimented UNICEF for its leadership as Chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations in 2022. A representative commended UNICEF for its impactful contributions to the Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) joint programme and the global AIDS response. A delegation was encouraged by the strides made to combat HIV/AIDS over the past 40 years but expressed concern about current challenges and setbacks. It expressed gratitude to UNICEF for maintaining HIV and AIDS-related health-care services in Ukraine following the outbreak of war. It welcomed the integrated approaches to HIV/AIDS in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and efforts to reach teenage girls in Eastern and Southern Africa, particularly those aimed at providing sexual and reproductive health and rights. It asked how UNICEF could target the young boys who were overrepresented among those newly infected with HIV in two regions. The Associate Director highlighted the role of UNICEF in data and analysis and advocacy to better understand affected populations and ensure evidence-based responses.

38. Another delegation encouraged UNAIDS cosponsors to continue a constructive dialogue on sustainable financing of UNAIDS. It asked that UNICEF keep prioritizing



the response in its budget and maintenance of specialized staff, and requested information on incoming resources for HIV/AIDS and UNICEF ability to leverage funding. The Associate Director said that UNICEF acknowledged the importance of having a fully funded Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework and an effective Joint Programme, and that it also leveraged additional resources to ensure that it met its targets.

39. A delegation commended UNICEF on its efforts to prevent vertical transmission of HIV. It expressed disagreement with approaches that focus on key population groups, viewed the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026 and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS as not being consensus-based, expressed objections to some of the wording in those documents, and asserted that UNICEF projects should conform with national legislation and consider a country's cultural characteristics. It enquired how UNICEF worked with key population groups in the context of assistance provided to children and teenagers, and how that differed from UNAIDS approaches. The Associate Director affirmed that UNICEF supported children and adolescents in countries without discrimination to meet its targets to end AIDS.

40. Another delegation welcomed UNICEF commitment to advocacy across several areas to meet the objectives of the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026. It said that HIV prevention and treatment programmes that did not recognize the diversity of populations and their unique needs would not successfully curb transmission.

41. A delegation affirmed its commitment to eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV globally. It asked whether the co-sponsors had received clarity from UNAIDS on the criteria used to determine how funds would be allocated in 2023 and about UNICEF views on a pilot project to embed UNAIDS Coordinators in resident coordinators offices. The Associate Director said that discussions on the funding mechanisms were ongoing. She expressed UNICEF support for the approach to embed UNAIDS Coordinators in the specific countries identified.

42. Another delegation urged that Member States innovate in their ways of working together – with other countries and United Nations agencies – to mobilize resources, to fulfil their official development assistance commitments and to help countries regain lost ground. The Associate Director thanked the delegation for its national leadership in the HIV response.

## **C. UNICEF humanitarian action**

### **(a) Update on UNICEF humanitarian action**

43. The update (UNICEF/2023/EB/3) was presented by the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes.

44. Several delegations expressed their support for the people of Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic following the recent earthquakes. The representative of Türkiye expressed gratitude for the solidarity shown by countries and international organizations and thanked UNICEF for its timely response and cooperation.

45. A delegation stressed that children in Ukraine and those displaced into neighbouring countries needed access to life-saving supplies, especially during winter. It welcomed the cooperation between national authorities and the UNICEF emergency response in-country, and acknowledged the work of the National Committee in ensuring sustained support for refugees from Ukraine.

46. A group of delegations reiterated the call for Member States to provide more quality funding for humanitarian action. It enquired about the main challenges for the Children's Climate Risk Index; steps taken by UNICEF to minimize its carbon and environmental footprint; and the adequacy of systems to ensure staff security and

safety. The Director said that the Index had been a useful advocacy tool that could be further strengthened through analysis of often-lacking decentralized data. Security systems for all staff were based on an inter-agency approach to ensure that activities were conducted within acceptable levels of security risk. The group of delegations encouraged more efforts on anticipatory action, while another delegation emphasized the additional importance of mitigatory actions and adaptation efforts. The Director said that while progress had been made in preparedness, additional support for anticipatory action was needed. For the first time, preparedness had been reflected in the global humanitarian appeal.

47. A delegation reported that it was drafting a second national action plan on the rights of the child and implementing its first five-year UNICEF country programme. It highlighted its contributions of funding, medicines and supplies to Ukraine and its hosting of refugees.

48. Speaking of the recent drought affecting millions of households in its country, another delegation commended UNICEF work to alleviate the nutrition crisis.

49. A delegation asked how UNICEF was ensuring that support from the international financial institutions complemented the humanitarian response and helped to build community long-term resilience. It asked about progress on the Humanitarian Review's recommendation that included ensuring sufficient evidence for UNICEF to judge key aspects of humanitarian practice; prioritizing coverage over target interventions; and ensuring a structured and comprehensive approach to accountability to affected populations. The Director said that international financial institutions complemented humanitarian response efforts and strengthened programming for resilience.

50. Another delegation asked about plans and timelines to close the funding gap for Humanitarian Review implementation. It encouraged a continued UNICEF focus on risk analysis, preparedness, localization and partnerships; strengthening cluster system coordination; and development and implementation of integrated strategies and action plans addressing humanitarian needs, sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence in emergencies. The Director thanked the delegation for its funding for the Humanitarian Review. Responding to the comment on partnerships, the Director reported that UNICEF was working with many partners on cholera, horizon scanning, COVID-19 and other areas.

51. A delegation enquired how UNICEF engaged local partners as part of its localization strategy to ensure compliance with its code of conduct to prevent gender-based violence and sexual abuse and exploitation, and whether all partners and beneficiaries had access to UNICEF reporting mechanisms. It said it would welcome updates on UNICEF nexus approach to WASH across regions; and examples of how strategic collaboration frameworks with United Nations agencies were operationalized at country level to illustrate UNICEF comparative advantages and lead role. The Director reported increasing efforts by UNICEF to integrate gender-based violence and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse as part of the response across sectors.

52. A delegation expressed regret that attempts had been made by some countries to politicize the discussions under the agenda item. It emphasized its role as a large agricultural power, its contributions to ensuring global food security, and its position as a refugee-hosting nation.

**(b) Update on COVID-19 vaccination and the progress achieved through the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership**

53. The Global Lead Coordinator for COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery presented the update (UNICEF/2023/EB/6).

54. Several delegations applauded the partnership's progress and commended UNICEF for its leadership. A delegation noted the pandemic-related decline in routine childhood vaccinations and negative impacts on education. It looked forward to the partnership's conclusions on regional institutionalized cooperation; asked how countries that had not met vaccination targets would manage; what permanent structural health systems and delivery improvements would remain; and whether UNICEF saw opportunities in enduring partnerships between national health authorities, the United Nations, financial institutions and the private sector. The Global Lead Coordinator confirmed that addressing the drop in routine vaccinations and integrating COVID-19 vaccination into primary health care was a core focus for the agencies, which would continue to support countries that had not met their targets. In terms of partnership opportunities, there had been improvements in the cold chain, investments in health management information systems, and increased availability of oxygen over the past two years, but continued attention was needed to strengthen community health systems and to pay and protect community health workers.

55. Another delegation asked how the transition road map would reflect the integration of vaccine delivery with routine health-care services and equitable access to vaccines; which partners would be engaged in the transition discussions; and the views regarding possible localization of vaccine production and the distribution chain. The Global Lead Coordinator listed the many partners involved in the discussions. Decentralizing the means of production of medical counter-measures had been a lesson learned. In line with the "one country team" concept, an expanded approach to immunization could bring together a range of partners, including non-governmental organizations, those focused on non-communicable diseases, and communities working on HIV and on tuberculosis.

56. A delegation said that advancing access to safe and effective vaccines in humanitarian settings remained a challenge and urged that efforts to preserve routine childhood immunizations be prioritized. It urged the inclusion of primary doses and boosters in integration efforts and that the transition road map include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and asked that UNICEF provide regular updates on its cooperation with members of the partnership.

57. The Global Lead Coordinator informed that overall, support to countries would entail continued COVID-19 vaccination with a focus on high-priority groups, recovery of essential immunization and integration of COVID-19 vaccine into primary health care.

58. A delegation asked how funding disbursed translated into vaccines delivered and whether there were countries where absorption capacity had been reached and there was unused funding. It requested information on the bottlenecks to vaccine delivery in countries in crisis, how the partnerships ensured that vaccines reached the most vulnerable populations, and reflections on the partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The Global Lead Coordinator said that the funding leveraged by the partnership had focused on quick-impact actions and campaigns, in particular, and had been utilized rapidly. For the unspent funds in countries, partners were exploring health system strengthening and bundling with health and humanitarian activities, including in countries managing crises. The goodwill of all partners had been key to success.

59. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, said that the COVID-19 vaccines that had been allocated for humanitarian settings had not been successful since they had been approved under an emergency listing that did not provide manufacturers with indemnity against liability. He cautioned that immediate work on the issue was needed. The Global Lead Coordinator informed that during a meeting in Nairobi the following week on COVID-19 vaccination in humanitarian settings, the key actors were expected to address the issues of indemnification and liability.

**D. Update on metrics and indicators used to measure progress on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and inform strategies, policies and procedures**

60. The Director, Division of Human Resources, presented the update ([E/ICEF/2023/5](#)).

61. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss how progress on protection from and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was measured. A group of delegations underscored that more knowledge and learning were needed to ensure that all employees, implementing partners and beneficiaries of the United Nations system were adequately protected and could count on a system that put victims/survivors at the heart of its approach. While prevention and response efforts could be difficult to measure, the group said that it was necessary to go beyond simple quantitative data on activities and outputs and focus on results and impact, with a well-coordinated and system-wide United Nations response in order to be effective.

62. A delegation commended UNICEF for striving for an organizational culture of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and for recognizing the centrality of protection, accountability and gender equality in its strategies, policies and procedures. The delegation said that UNICEF could expand its current efforts to ensure survivor-centred support, particularly during the investigative process.

63. Highlighting that the issue was central to upholding the reputation of the United Nations as a trusted global partner, another delegation noted that the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network had recently provided a summary of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment policy application by six organizations, including UNICEF. The delegation supported the recommendations, which included a more systemic United Nations-wide approach, an improved common understanding of a victim/survivor-centred approach, and more consistent due diligence and risk management frameworks. Another delegation said that the progress being witnessed showed that UNICEF was moving in the right direction.

64. In response to a question about how UNICEF measured culture change and accountability, the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, noted that UNICEF relied on a series of different measures, such as trends in terms of reports that were being made to the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and to the Ethics Office, the disciplinary measures taken once misconduct had been established, and the perceptions of its workforce by conducting a Global Staff Survey every couple of years and a Pulse Check on workplace culture every six months.

65. Asked about inter-agency collaboration centred around sexual harassment, the Principal Adviser said that UNICEF participated quite actively in the Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, which had been established under the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, and which served as the primary forum to strategize, share data, lessons and challenges, and plan efforts to address sexual harassment in a more coordinated manner. Regarding inter-agency

coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, the Senior Adviser, Child Protection, confirmed that UNICEF contributed significantly to both the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations working group on sexual exploitation and abuse, with the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate, as well as provided support to inter-agency coordination at country level.

66. In response to questions regarding operationalizing a victim/survivor-centred approach, the Senior Adviser, Child Protection, confirmed that a survivor-centred approach cut across all UNICEF work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, its programmes and its operations. The approach was anchored in the three key priorities of the organization's strategy: safe and accessible reporting mechanisms; quality survivor assistance that was available and accessible; and timely and child-friendly investigations based on informed consent. She added that UNICEF had led the roll-out of the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which was developed jointly with the Victims' Rights Advocate and United Nations entities.

67. Responding to a question about how UNICEF tracked the progress made in strengthening the system to make perpetrators accountable, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, emphasized that there had been significant improvement in terms of the speak-up culture in the reporting and growth over the years from the programmes on the ground. It was critical for the work done among the wider community that UNICEF work with the rest of the United Nations and the non-governmental community in an informed manner. She said that over the past few years, UNICEF had allocated a significant amount of core budget towards programming related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as well as towards improving internal systems, but, like with any other sector, core and non-core resources were urgently needed, as well as consistency in responding, and she appealed for additional financial support.

68. The Deputy Executive Director also requested that the Executive Board consider the possibility of combining the two sessions where updates were provided on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse into one session, which would allow for a more comprehensive update on progress.

## **E. Update on the status of the independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function**

69. The Director of Evaluation presented the update ([E/ICEF/2023/6](#)).

70. Delegations welcomed the update on the independent peer review, stating that it was an important mechanism to continuously strengthen the organizational culture within UNICEF and for learning and accountability. A delegation said that evaluation was distinct from other functions on the oversight spectrum as a tool for UNICEF to achieve more and better results for children, particularly children in vulnerable situations.

71. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the participatory nature of the review process, which had allowed for extensive engagement with key stakeholders. The delegation welcomed the close alignment of the peer review with the overarching United Nations Evaluation Group Framework for Professional Peer Reviews, as that enabled comparability of peer reviews and the sharing of lessons across the United Nations system. A delegation expressed appreciation that the guiding question of the peer review targeted both the enabling environment for the evaluation function and the evaluation function itself. The delegation also expressed appreciation for the added focus on evaluation use across UNICEF to foster learning and accountability and ultimately improve the quality of programming for children.

72. Asked to share tentative findings of the peer review related to new and innovative evaluation methods, the Director of Evaluation said that one major recommendation was to better harness new technologies and old methods alike, which aligned with the direction the evaluation function had been taking the past year. As an example, he said that artificial intelligence accelerated document review processes while also lowering their cost, and that the evaluation function was currently putting together a synthesis of evaluation findings across UNICEF. Another recommendation was to better use the existing data within UNICEF, which the Director welcomed.

73. In response to a question about the specific metrics for evaluating what had and had not worked well with the current evaluation policy, the Director of Evaluation said that the measurement of the evaluation function's success was anchored in quantitative key performance indicators including evaluation expenditure and evaluation coverage, as well as a qualitative sense of where the function was heading. Asked how the evaluation policy would continue to be anchored within UNICEF, he said that the process that would unfold over the next few weeks would strike a balance of preserving the function's essential aspects, including independence and impartiality. At the same time, in light of the highly decentralized structure of UNICEF, the evaluation function did not want to achieve maximum independence if it meant compromising its relationship of trust with key stakeholders throughout the organization.

74. The Director of Evaluation said that the final report of the peer review panel would soon be finalized and that he would present the findings in more detail at the annual session as part of a presentation on the draft revised evaluation policy. The revised policy would be presented again at the second regular session of 2023, and would incorporate the feedback of the Board.

#### **F. Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and management response**

75. The Director of Evaluation presented the summary report ([E/ICEF/2023/3](#)), followed by the Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2023/4](#)).

76. Delegations expressed appreciation for efforts by UNICEF to assess and identify actions necessary to ensure that it had the technical and strategic elements to successfully deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. A group of delegations welcomed that UNICEF had taken the initiative to reflect on its capabilities to fulfil the current Strategic Plan at the beginning, which it said encouraged early learning and would allow UNICEF to take timely corrective action.

77. While acknowledging that the formative evaluation included findings that were to be expected at the early stage of implementing the new Strategic Plan, the group noted that some of the strategic elements lacked readiness, given the lack of convergence and insufficient use of evidence for decision-making. The group emphasized the urgency with which key themes around risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming, resilience, climate action and peacebuilding needed to be addressed, and said that it counted on UNICEF to establish strong organizational foundations within the different existing departments for approaches in those fields. It also noted the imbalance between goals and available resources, and encouraged UNICEF to prepare better cost estimates and streamlined funding processes that prioritized needs over historical funding volumes.

78. In response, the Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, said that the Programme Group had been trying to strengthen its technical capability

at the global level, which was complemented by new guidance and further supported by metrics. A new system of monitoring on country strategic indicators had also been introduced. With regard to funding, the Director said that one element involved a push towards more core resources and soft earmarked funding, as well as more predictable funding, which would allow for a slow move towards costing of an outcome-based Strategic Plan and the development of a methodology.

79. A group of delegations expressed appreciation for efforts by UNICEF during the past year to operationalize its revised monitoring and reporting system, which would be crucial for informing strategic decision-making. The group encouraged UNICEF to continue improving its evidence base to better measure efficiency and welcomed the new knowledge management strategy, which it said should help to increase the impact of the evidence function. The group also supported the recommendation to strengthen the change management capability within UNICEF to help the organization deliver on the Strategic Plan, and encouraged UNICEF to devote sufficient resources to move that forward in the current year. The Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, said that shifts had been made in the way that the Change Management Unit would be staffed and supported, and that the approach would be closely linked to the priorities of the Strategic Plan that required changes.

80. In response to questions about how UNICEF intended to share related best practices and experience, the Director said that knowledge management was central to the evidence function. There was a strong knowledge management network across the organization, as UNICEF had spent the past two years building many of the related tools, procedures and capabilities. She provided the example of learning circles, which had been set up around key areas related to the Strategic Plan where the organization needed to be transformative so that the ambitions of the Plan could be translated and supported at the country programme level.

81. Another delegation expressed support for plans to accelerate work and make data available in real time, so as to enhance knowledge-informed programming, and asked about the time frame for such data-driven systems to be fully operational. The Director said that UNICEF was incorporating new data technologies and the use of big data to improve the capability of visualizing data in both a more disaggregated way and across sectors.

82. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/3 under agenda item 16 (see annex).

## **G. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response**

83. The Deputy Director of External Audit, Chile, representing the United Nations Board of Auditors, presented the report of the Board of Auditors. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, introduced the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 and management response to the report of the Board of Auditors ([A/77/5/Add.3](#)). The Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, presented the financial report and audited financial statements as well as the management response to the report of the Board of Auditors ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.2](#)).

84. Several delegations welcomed the unqualified opinion that UNICEF had received on its financial statements for 2021. A delegation said that while it was mindful of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it urged UNICEF to continue its strong efforts in closing all Board of Auditors recommendations to the



extent possible and reporting on those efforts in 2024. A group of delegations welcomed that the Board of Auditors had not identified significant errors, omissions or misstatements. The group said, however, that the Board of Auditors had identified scope for improvement in certain areas, and noted with concern the identified weaknesses related to closure of action points, delays in reporting activities and segregation of duties, although it welcomed taken and planned actions by UNICEF. The group also noted that the number of recommendations remained consistent with the previous year, with 23 recommendations for 2021 and 22 recommendations for 2020, compared with 55 recommendations in 2019. In response, the Comptroller provided a historical context to explain the trend in the number of recommendations over the past few years. He further said that UNICEF had an automated platform that monitored the segregation of duties and that, going forward, UNICEF would provide an audit trail of mitigation actions for review by the auditors.

85. Another group of delegations said that it appreciated the continued commitment of UNICEF to promote a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability in delivering results for children. Welcoming the reduction of open audit recommendations, the group encouraged UNICEF to implement the remaining recommendations without delay. The group also called on UNICEF to swiftly address the weaknesses identified in its emergency preparedness plans, noting with concern that the emergency preparedness plans of 77 country offices and the risk analyses of 102 country offices were overdue. In response, the Comptroller said that UNICEF was always eager to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors and took that work seriously. He said that some countries had not uploaded their plans into the Emergency Preparedness Plan Platform, and so the work done had not been properly reflected. As of January 2023, all countries had uploaded their preparedness plans and risk analyses, which would be available for verification by the auditors in their ongoing audit.

86. The group also noted that the number of fraud or presumptive fraud cases reported by UNICEF had increased, representing a significant financial loss. The group strongly encouraged UNICEF to strengthen its anti-fraud awareness activities and training, and asked if UNICEF planned to undertake joint initiatives with other United Nations agencies. The Comptroller confirmed that work with other United Nations agencies would continue to build capacity in terms of fraud response and the sharing of best practices. He added that UNICEF had mechanisms for fraud detection, deterrence and loss recovery, and would provide further guidance on fraud risk management.

87. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/4 under agenda item 16 (see annex).

## **H. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2023 workplan and proposed budget**

88. The Deputy Executive Director ad interim, Partnerships, introduced the item, followed by the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, who presented the report ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.1](#)) and accompanying update.

89. A group of delegations noted investments made in digital capabilities, collaboration with the Programme Group, and strengthened country office capacity to engage with businesses, and encouraged consistent and transparent reporting of innovative financing instruments. It highlighted the importance of targeted communication towards the private sector and donors. The group welcomed the UNICEF innovative financing approach, noting that collaboration with international financial institutions and development finance institutions could help to leverage new sources of funding for children. It stressed the importance of robust governance



systems and accountability and oversight mechanisms, due diligence, compliance with UNICEF financial regulations and rules, and regular information exchange with the Executive Board on financing instruments. The Director confirmed that UNICEF continuously examined and improved its already robust due diligence processes. The organization had a value chain around the new ways of doing business and crowding sources of capital, which were leveraged by diversification – across the public and private sectors, and within each income stream.

90. A delegation expressed support for UNICEF efforts to build public-private partnerships and leverage private sector expertise. It encouraged UNICEF to grow private sector revenue; continue to coordinate and synchronize efforts to expand private sector partnerships with other United Nations agencies' engagement platforms; adapt its value proposition as needed; and identify, respond and report to the Executive Board on any new market opportunities arising in-between Board sessions. The delegation asked what the most important lesson learned from the World Bank instrument was. The Director affirmed that public-private partnerships were a priority for UNICEF, which continued to explore means of getting sustainable, long-term flexible income, and to find the optimal balance between types of funding. UNICEF was leveraging the recent shifts within the private sector and exploring the different high-value channels that could provide long-term support.

91. Another delegation enquired about UNICEF strategies to promote more quality funding from donors and partners. It asked how the Dynamo Revolving Fund was complementary to the regular investment budget and additional finances available to country offices from the World Bank instrument, and what capitalization was expected by the end of 2023. The Director reported that most recently, some corporate donors had demonstrated flexibility in their engagement with UNICEF, and the organization would therefore hone the skills needed to advocate for flexibility, for example by advocating for funding for forgotten crises even where donor funds had been specifically targeted. She explained the various pillars of investment: \$85 million from core resources, focused on mature markets; \$50 million from the World Bank instrument, already invested and producing significant results; and the Dynamo Revolving Fund, capitalized with \$20 million to invest in country offices.

92. The Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, said that a third-party assessment of the joint UNICEF/World Bank instrument would be presented to the Board at its annual session. He said that in addition to the \$20 million already capitalized in the Dynamo Revolving Fund, there would be further capitalization of \$18.7 million, and urged the Member States to help UNICEF to further capitalize the Fund.

93. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/5 under agenda item 16 (see annex).

## **I. Oral update on the work of the National Committees for UNICEF**

94. The Deputy Executive Director ad interim, Partnerships, introduced the agenda item, acknowledging the long-standing partnership with the National Committees, recognized in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, and their key role in mobilizing resources for UNICEF and influencing the child rights agenda domestically and globally. The Executive Director of the Dutch Committee for UNICEF, as Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees, presented the update, after which a video was shown.

95. The President acknowledged the National Committees as being unique and valuable. A group of delegations said that the Committees played an indispensable role in the UNICEF ecosystem and business model. The group noted the Committees' important contribution to UNICEF income, including the largest share of regular

resources, and key role in advocating for children's rights and adding visibility to UNICEF worldwide work. The group noted the National Committee engagement with municipalities in the framework of Child Friendly Cities as an example of their profound and lasting impact on children's lives. The group said that it would welcome annual oral updates on the work of the Committees at the first regular session; discussions on the Committees' role in generating income and about innovative and alternative financing opportunities, including reviewing associated risks; and more frequent informal discussions between the UNICEF management, Executive Board and the Committees.

96. The Chair noted the close, positive collaboration between the Committees and the UNICEF Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships and looked forward to discussions to explore new and improved ways of working.

## **J. Update on UNICEF engagement with international financial institutions**

97. The Deputy Executive Director ad interim, Partnerships, introduced the item, followed by the Director, Public Partnerships Division, who presented the report (UNICEF/2023/EB/7).

98. Delegations welcomed the update and two requested regular briefings to the Executive Board, noting that partnerships with international financial institutions were increasingly important in the context of mounting global challenges and a widening Sustainable Development Goal financial gap. Commending UNICEF for the work undertaken to bolster such partnerships at all levels, a group of delegations encouraged the organization to continue to enhance them to leverage more and better resources for children, particularly as pressures on official development assistance budgets continued to grow.

99. In response to a question from the group regarding how UNICEF was working with international financing institutions in developing joint analyses and strategies at the country level, the Director, Public Partnerships Division, stated that the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework was the central United Nations planning piece that required integrated and joined-up planning and enabled government ownership. For its part, UNICEF was making every effort to ensure that the United Nations system truly delivered as one.

100. Expressing appreciation that UNICEF was scaling up and strengthening its work with international financial institutions, a delegation welcomed that partnerships were not only focused on leveraging finance, but also applied the unique knowledge of UNICEF to help influence the policies and investments of international financial institutions to serve the rights and needs of children. The delegation said that collaborations should aim to contribute to an integrated and coherent development agenda, especially at country level. It stressed that international financial institutions could not and should not replace financing through the United Nations system, and that it was important that Member States live up to the common commitments regarding funding. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, said that the partnership allowed for a full complement of strategic engagement and action on the ground, adding that earmarked funding could not replace core funding.

101. A delegation welcomed the increased coordination with international financial institutions in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable contexts and humanitarian crises, which it said brought opportunities to deliver quality and principled care and services for children. The delegation asked about the international financial institution-related revenue projection for 2023, and what proportion of those resources would be invested in humanitarian activities versus longer-term

development programmes. Another delegation asked what steps UNICEF was taking to ensure that support from international financial institutions complemented the humanitarian response in crisis-affected areas and helped to build longer-term resilience of communities in countries. In response, the Director, Programme Group, said that the dual mandate of UNICEF and its operational presence in the field put the organization in a good position to achieve such outcomes. For example, in the Horn of Africa, UNICEF programmes had supported groundwater mapping to increase sustainable access of water during drought. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, added that final financial figures for 2022 were not yet available, but a similar scale of financing was anticipated for 2023, a large proportion of which was for programming in fragile humanitarian contexts, which would help to build the resilience of communities.

## **K. Report of the field visit of the Executive Board of UNICEF**

102. The report of the field visit of the Executive Board to Thailand (UNICEF/2023/EB/4) was presented by H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan Valverde, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, on behalf of the delegation that participated in the visit. Prior to the presentation, a video on the field visit was shown.

103. The delegation of Thailand thanked the Executive Board, the UNICEF Thailand Country Office and the UNICEF secretariat team for making the field visit a success. The visit had provided opportunities for constructive engagement between the Executive Board members and relevant Thai agencies and authorities, both at national and local levels, as well as with other partners and civil society organizations working on the ground. The representative also thanked the Executive Board for a comprehensive report, which he said not only captured the achievements and progress made in Thailand, but also identified areas for further improvement, such as green skills development and preparation for an ageing society. He added that Thailand stood ready to share its experience in working and partnering with UNICEF and other multi-stakeholders to further advance children's rights in the country and beyond.

104. A delegation recalled rule 6 of the Executive Board rules of procedure, which stated that documentation in the appropriate official languages relating to items on the provisional agenda should be submitted to the members of the Board at least six weeks before the commencement of an annual session and as soon as possible before a regular session, preferably six weeks. The delegation noted that the report of the field visit to Thailand had been published on the Executive Board website on 2 February, only a week prior. The delegation also stated that there had been a lack of transparency in how the visit had been organized and said that it hoped that the decision of the secretariat to limit the number of participants had not been politically motivated.

105. In response, the President said that the guidelines stated that there was one seat per regional group for travel. The Secretary noted that the entire Bureau had been consulted in the process leading up to the field visit, and that discussions regarding participation had taken place in each of the regional groups, with the nominations being validated by the Bureau. In terms of the report, the Secretary said that it was a Member State report, and that his Office had been guided by the Bureau, which had determined that the report could be submitted late on an exceptional basis and discussed during the first regular session.

## **L. Other matters**

106. The provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2023 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

## **M. Adoption of draft decisions**

107. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2023/2 through 2023/5 (see annex). Decision 2023/1 was formally adopted under agenda item 4.

108. After the adoption of the decisions, a group of delegations said that it supported the one-year extension of the ongoing country programme document for Afghanistan so that UNICEF could continue to assist the Afghan people to meet their humanitarian and basic needs. However, the group condemned in the strongest terms recent Taliban decisions to ban Afghan girls and women from education and to restrict their employment and movement. The group said that it joined the international community and the United Nations in calling on the Taliban to reverse the discriminatory and counterproductive policies that interfered with the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, the group expressed appreciation for the dedication, commitment and service of the front-line workers who continued to provide assistance, promote human rights, and build a better Afghanistan each day.

## **N. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board**

109. The Executive Director emphasized that the success of UNICEF programmes depended on strong support from its partners. Many examples had been discussed during the session: the approval of 15 new programme documents and extensions of five ongoing programmes; work with the World Health Organization, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and others in the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnerships; joint work to combat child wasting with the World Food Programme; strategic engagement with international financial institution partners; and partnerships with the 33 National Committees for UNICEF.

110. The Executive Director emphasized that UNICEF needed to strengthen and expand its partnerships to reach the most vulnerable children and help them to successfully navigate a world of crisis. During the session, discussions had included the need for UNICEF to continuously take stock and improve, with presentations including updates on improvements to internal oversight and on the progress made on work to prevent sexual exploitation and sexual harassment. In cooperation with its partners, UNICEF would continue to sharpen related strategies, policies and procedures, including on provision of support to survivors.

111. The Executive Director emphasized that efforts needed to be made to stop the backsliding and accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This would mean redoubling joint advocacy to put children's rights at the centre of pandemic recovery planning and system strengthening, and maintaining the focus on reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. She called on all Member States to join the effort, and urged that the opportunities presented by upcoming global forums be seized to advance the cause of children.

112. The President commended the Executive Board and UNICEF for the quality of discussions and deliberations during the session. She highlighted the smooth process by which five important decisions had been adopted and thanked the delegations for their constructive engagement, active participation and willingness to find compromises.

113. The President expressed her gratitude to her fellow Bureau members, the Ambassadors from Argentina, Tajikistan, Poland and Rwanda who were serving as Vice-Presidents on the Bureau for 2023. She thanked the UNICEF Executive Director and senior management team, the staff of the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the facilitators and overall coordinator of the

draft decisions, the UNICEF technical focal points and the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board for their contributions. She said that without the combined efforts of those hardworking, dedicated and resilient colleagues, the Executive Board sessions could not be successful.

114. In concluding, the President expressed confidence that she could count on the continued support and steadfast commitment of the membership in pursuit of the common goal of improving the lives and well-being of children.

## Annex

### Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2023

#### 2023/L.1

##### Country programme documents

###### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents for Algeria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Nepal and Sao Tome and Principe ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.2–E/ICEF/2023/P/L.6](#), [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.8–E/ICEF/2023/P/L.10](#) and [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.12–E/ICEF/2023/P/L.14](#)), the multi-country programme for the Pacific Islands ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.1](#)) and the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.11](#)), including aggregate indicative budgets, were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 15 November to 5 December 2022; that the common country programme document for Cabo Verde ([DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1](#)), including aggregate indicative budget, was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 7 November to 25 November 2022; and that the country programme document for Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.7](#)), including aggregate indicative budget, was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 18 November to 8 December 2022;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents for Algeria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the multi-country programme for the Pacific Islands, the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine, and the common country programme document for Cabo Verde ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2023/P/L.14](#) and [DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1](#)), including aggregate indicative budgets.

*First regular session  
8 February 2023*

#### 2023/L.2

##### Extensions of ongoing country programmes

###### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the six-month extension of the country programme for Papua New Guinea, following a six-month extension; and the 10-month extension of the country programme for Mauritania, following a two-month extension, both of which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.15](#);

2. *Approves* the 10-month extension of the country programme for Brazil, following a one-year extension and a two-month extension; the proposed 10-month extension of the country programme for the Gambia, following a one-year extension and a two-month extension; and the proposed 10-month extension of the country programme for Afghanistan, following a two-year extension, a three-month extension

and an 11-month extension, all of which are presented in table 2 of document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.15](#).

*First regular session  
9 February 2023*

### **2023/L.3**

#### **Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and management response**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, its summary ([E/ICEF/2023/3](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2023/4](#));

2. *Calls upon* UNICEF to implement all 12 recommendations and maintain the fundamental organizational strengths identified in the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation, to ensure that the organization is better positioned to achieve the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to further elaborate the action plan, including concrete actions, to enable maximum achievement of these recommendations in the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation, and to present to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2024 an update on progress achieved as part of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

*First regular session  
9 February 2023*

### **2023/L.4**

#### **UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the unqualified audit opinion for 2021 issued by the Board of Auditors, the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2021 ([A/77/5/Add.3](#)) as well as the management response ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.2](#));

2. *Also welcomes* the progress made by UNICEF in implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, and supports the ongoing efforts of UNICEF management to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors;

3. *Calls upon* UNICEF to report on the impacts of the implementation of these recommendations, with inclusion of references to aspects of organizational culture, such as briefings to staff, trainings or updated standard operating procedures, in its reporting on audit recommendations;

4. *Recalls* its decisions 2020/6, paragraph 5, and 2021/4, paragraph 3, and underlines the importance of timely closure of recommendations related to the management of implementing partners.

*First regular session  
9 February 2023*

**2023/L.5**

**Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2023 workplan and proposed budget**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Notes* the high, medium and low revenue scenarios for 2023, as shown in table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.1](#);

2. *Approves* a budget for special purpose activities of \$160.3 million from regular resources, comprising \$85 million for investment funds and \$75.3 million for other private sector fundraising costs, and the establishment of an other resources ceiling of \$66 million based on the medium scenario in table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.1](#);

3. *Authorizes* UNICEF:

(a) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1, above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(b) To decrease or increase expenditures up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.1](#) should the apparent revenue from fundraising decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2023 approved workplan;

4. *Encourages* the Executive Director to identify and respond to opportunities in new markets, should they arise, between Executive Board sessions and to notify the Board accordingly;

5. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2024 of \$16.0 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation of \$160.3 million), to be absorbed into the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2024.

*First regular session  
9 February 2023*