

Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

13 - 16 June 2023

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Intervention by the Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees to Item 3: Annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Madam President, Executive Director Russell, distinguished delegates, National Committee colleagues,

My name is Michael Nyenhuis. I am President and CEO of UNICEF USA and have recently been selected by my National Committee peers to serve as Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees. It is my privilege to represent the 33 Committees in this session of the UNICEF Executive Board. I would like to begin by thanking Suzanne Laszlo, Executive Director of UNICEF Netherlands, who preceded me as chair, for her service. Building from her effective leadership, the National Committees remain committed to advancing UNICEF's mission so that every child can be healthy, educated, protected and respected. I would also like to extend a sincere thank you to Karin Hulshof, who has been a strong supporter of the National Committees during her time as interim DED.

We join Executive Director Russell and our UNICEF colleagues in celebrating the great achievements for children over the past year. I have seen this effective work myself in Turkiye after the earthquakes, Kenya in the midst of drought and Romania where refugees sought safety in the early days of the Ukraine War. The work you oversee as the Executive Board saves and changes the lives of countless children every day. I know you are proud of that work, and so are we. But we live in a time of polycrisis for children. COVID, conflict, climate change and calamities like earthquakes threaten much of the progress we have made in recent decades and put at risk the targets of the SDGs. UNICEF, therefore, has never been needed more. And that means National Committees have never been more important.

We are the major contributor of private sector resources to UNICEF. We influence our governments so that they, too, invest in UNICEF's work. We advocate before our elected bodies and government agencies for policies that benefit children globally and domestically. We create space for young people in our countries to have their voices heard and to participate in their futures. We inspire the public to be champions of child rights. Will effectively and carefully steward the UNICEF brand in our countries.

I joined UNICEF USA three years ago after nearly 25 years working for private NGOs in the global humanitarian and development sector. I had the opportunity to see UNICEF from the outside and knew of the quality of its work. In my time inside the UNICEF family I have come to understand what drives that work — it is the committed, professional UNICEF staff that deliver our results for children every day. We know that they won't stop until every child is reached.

That same spirit extends to the National Committee staff as well. We, too, attract the best and brightest in our countries. They are drawn to us by the power of the UNICEF brand, the scale and scope of UNICEF's work and the opportunity to contribute to it through the work of our committees.

Madam President, Executive Director Russell,

UNICEF's mission is our mission. We are proud to wear UNICEF blue. We are committed to accelerating our contribution to the goals of UNICEF's strategic plan and the targets of the SDGs.

Thank you.

Michael J. Nyenhuis
President and CEO – UNICEF USA
Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees