

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

13 June 2023, 10 am – 1 pm

Thank you, Madam President.

Let me begin by thanking the Executive Director, Ms. Catherine Russell, for her comprehensive overview of the activities of the UNICEF and sharing her priorities amidst the multiple global challenges.

We commend the performance of UNICEF in 2022, the first year of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, with most result areas are on track or exceeded the target.

During this time, UNICEF invested in its five organizational performance enablers in order to become a more agile, value-based, effective and efficient organization that can respond effectively to change and uncertainty.

Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

Given the integrated nature of the world, economic, political and social turmoil in one part of the world affects others in complex ways. These shocks exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of children, taking the greatest toll on the poorest and marginalized, and discriminated based on disability, gender, race, ethnicity.

Madam President,

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

First, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated education exclusion for learners. The share of children living in learning poverty has increased to 70 per cent in 2022

from a pre-pandemic level of 57 per cent. At the Transforming Education Summit, a key initiative of the UN Secretary General, UNICEF highlighted the urgent need to address the digital divide through both connectivity and skills development, to reach hundreds of millions of children, who are being left behind.

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

Second, the effects of climate change on children’s health, development and well-being are becoming increasingly apparent. At COP27, UNICEF advocacy with its partners in the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative led to the formal recognition of the role of children and youth as agents of change in climate action, and parties were urged to include them in their process for designing and implementing climate policy and action.

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

Finally, the widening gap between total income and core funding for results has put UNICEF at a risk of becoming a project-driven organization rather than a mandate-driven one.

In this context, how do you plan to provide timely, coherent and harmonized support to countries in addressing socioeconomic challenges and achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

I thank you all.