

**Statement by Pakistan, During the Annual Session of
the UNICEF Executive Board – 2023
(13-15 June 2023)**

Madam. President,

We would like to thank Ms. Catherine Russels, Executive Director UNICEF for her statement and her outstanding work amidst enormous challenges the world is facing today.

The world is no doubt a better place for children due to the momentous contributions made by UNICEF and its numerous national operations over the past several decades. The past three years have witnessed a sharp deterioration in the living conditions of children especially in the developing countries.

Due to COVID, climate change and proliferatory conflicts, nearly 50 million children have been pushed back into extreme poverty, increasing the total number of children in poverty to over 400 million. Our children are not just the present but our future; the future we all aspire to make better children must therefore be at the center of our strategy, today or tomorrow, to achieve growth, prosperity, equity in all the world's nations.

Climate Change is posing an enormous threat to create a cycle of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, leading to increased infant and child mortality and child stunting. Worsening Climate situation will lead children more vulnerable to droughts, heat waves, floods, air pollution and water scarcity. And the effects of this crises would not be limited to this generation only.

Children living in conflict ridden areas are constantly under attack. In a context of increasingly prolonged wars, the world has witnessed an exacerbation of children's vulnerability to grave violations, including killing, maiming, abduction, sexual violence, recruitment into armed forces or groups, denial of humanitarian access, and attacks on hospitals, schools and water facilities.

The global economic crisis has deepened the deprivations of children all around the world. Projections show 1 in 4 children living under national poverty lines in 2023. This marks a return to 2019 levels, putting the world four years behind the expected 2030 trajectory for child poverty reduction and leaving millions of children to spend more of their formative years enduring deprivations with lifelong consequences.

Despite all the challenges the world is facing today, we note with appreciation how UNICEF has responded to both human-made crises and natural disasters. A prime example includes its efforts to help Pakistan during its recent floods. Pakistan being one of the countries gravely affected by climate change saw some of the worst floods of its history in 2022. UNICEF with its field offices and four operational hubs participated as a front liner in the rapid needs assessments and lead sectoral coordination in the WASH Program, Nutrition and Education sectors and Child Protection.

UNICEF's Nutrition program response continued its commendable work at the community level to prevent, detect and treat malnutrition among children and women in the flood affected districts of Pakistan. So far 569,880 primary caregivers of children

have been provided with Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling, multiple micronutrient powders (MNP) have been provided for 144,491 children and 718,080 children have been screened for malnutrition. UNICEF's nutrition support had an outreach to 1,290 Outpatient Therapeutic Program (OTP) sites across 49 flood affected districts.

The progress of UNICEF on its Strategic Plan 2022-25 is an inspiration for all of us. Despite all the odds, UNICEF's Programs to prevent malnutrition in all its forms, its initiatives for early detection and treatment of wasting, its vaccination and immunization programs, and its programs to prevent violence, exploitation and harmful practices, including through parenting support initiatives have positively contributed to the betterment of our vulnerable communities, including children. UNICEF's investments to strengthen delivery of mental health and psychosocial support is another step towards the attainment of Universal Health Coverage and 2030 Agenda. We would also like to commend UNICEF on its advocacy efforts with businesses and policymakers to support family-friendly policies, including; parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare and child benefits.

The level of ambition of the UNICEF Strategic Plan remains entirely relevant to the time where we are being shaken by the multitude of shocks. The key to facing those challenges right ahead is to have a more holistic understanding of the deprivations and discrimination being faced by the vulnerable communities, especially children. We need a systemic change to address these issues at the grass root level. Solidarity, Cooperation and partnerships amongst all the stakeholders is crucial to a better tomorrow that we aspire to create for our future generations.

We hope that the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 would further scale up its efforts to address needs of children in humanitarian crises, including natural disasters, conflicts and situations of foreign occupation.

We also urge international partners and donors to provide sustainable and adequate funding to UNICEF to enable it to fight the unprecedented impacts on children of the Covid-19 Pandemic, increasing proliferatory conflicts and the increasing frequency and severity of climate change.

I thank you.