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

(13–16 June 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](#)).



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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 (E/ICEF/2023/9) for the session.
2. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 40 observer delegations, including 1 intergovernmental organization, 2 international organizations, 6 non-governmental organizations and 8 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 opened the annual session of the Executive Board and welcomed all members and observers. She said that she looked forward to engaging, focused and constructive exchanges over the session as the Executive Board progressed through the 19 items on the agenda, which included 11 draft decisions. She also emphasized the need for discussions during the session to maintain a focus on the rights, protection and betterment of children's lives and put politics aside.
4. The President summarized the work facing the Board, providing an overview of the agenda items. The session would begin with consideration of the 2022 annual report of the Executive Director, which was the first report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. Also on the agenda were the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action, which sounded the alarm on the large number of children in need of humanitarian assistance and included an update on efforts by UNICEF to manage those extreme needs. The President said that the Board would also hear updates on UNICEF work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and on organizational culture and diversity.
5. The President highlighted that on the second day of the session, the Executive Board would focus on evaluation, audit and oversight matters, including the draft revised evaluation policy, which was being shared ahead of its presentation for adoption at the second regular session in September. She urged Executive Board members to engage in the last iteration of the evaluation policy before its adoption, noting that the evaluation function was a very important function for not only UNICEF, but also for the governance and oversight function of the Executive Board.
6. The President also urged Board members to pay close attention to the agenda item on the preliminary assessment of the World Bank instrument, noting that the innovative instrument might inspire other United Nations agencies and that the Executive Board might, at some point, need to decide on its continuation. She also highlighted the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, which would provide an update on UNICEF work to promote gender equality across its programmes.
7. The President thanked the co-chairs of the session for their support and extended gratitude to all participants in advance for their active engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The final number of observer delegations was 42 and the final number of non-governmental organizations was 7, including the credentials submitted during the session, after the announcement by the Secretary.

8. The Executive Director thanked the President for her steadfast leadership to UNICEF and the Bureau for its support. She described some of the important decisions facing the Executive Board and highlighted key subjects for discussion. She underlined the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals but warned that decades of progress were unravelling and that the road to 2030 was running out. She emphasized that the key was to put children's rights and well-being at the heart of collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. The Executive Director spoke of the need for summits to secure real political commitments to prioritize children, especially the most vulnerable, in ongoing recovery efforts related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and social services strengthening. She noted that accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals would mean addressing all issues facing children, including climate change. She summarized the climate-related risks that children faced and highlighted the need for UNICEF to mitigate the damage, keep children safe and help them adapt to a climate-changed world. She expressed her hope that upcoming climate summits would recognize children as a priority vulnerable population and that leaders would deliver on their commitment to doubling adaptation finance by 2025, with a focus on children and communities.

10. The Executive Director outlined the UNICEF response to the health and nutrition crisis and highlighted the organization's work to strengthen social protection systems to prevent malnutrition. In particular, she commended the efforts of community health workers and underlined the importance of community health programmes.

11. The Executive Director also highlighted UNICEF efforts to reach adolescent girls as tomorrow's changemakers, as well as vulnerable groups of children, including children with disabilities. She outlined the multiple humanitarian crises affecting children and summarized UNICEF efforts to reach children in need. She described results as strong but not enough and said that reaching all children in need would require far greater commitment, action and financing from Governments and the international community.

12. The Executive Director also spotlighted core resources for their importance in all areas of UNICEF work. She expressed concern about the decreasing proportion of such resources, noting that they had barely reached 14 per cent of overall UNICEF income in 2022, which she said should raise alarms with all Board members. She outlined steps that UNICEF had taken to improve the organization and described ongoing UNICEF engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.

13. The Executive Director reiterated the need to put children at the heart of Sustainable Development Goal acceleration and to redouble efforts to create a world fit for children. She welcomed new and returning staff to the Executive Board and extended heartfelt thanks to staff who were leaving. In closing, she thanked all participants again for their active involvement, which she described as incredibly helpful and important.

## II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

### A. Annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

14. The Director, Division of Data Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, introduced and presented the annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2023/10), which covered the first year of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

15. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, briefed delegates on the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2023/11).

16. Numerous delegations thanked the Executive Director for the report, welcomed the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and its emphasis on outcome-level systematic change, and commended UNICEF results and efforts to safeguard children and their rights. Many delegations also pledged their ongoing support to UNICEF and its interventions for the benefit of current and future generations. In response, the Executive Director thanked delegates for their contributions, praised the world's collective efforts and commitments and highlighted the need to grasp opportunities to implement systemic and sustainable change.

17. Multiple delegations expressed concern that time was running out for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, that targets were not being met and that children were bearing the brunt of the failure. In response, the Executive Director called for greater resources and efforts to meet the targets, highlighting various pressing issues, including the prevention of severe wasting and other forms of malnutrition.

18. Numerous delegations called for increased efforts to deliver collectively on the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly for children. Delegations emphasized the importance of upcoming summits for driving political engagement in children's well-being, including the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – also known as the SDG Summit – and the Summit of the Future.

19. A number of delegations emphasized the detrimental impact of climate change on children and recognized the importance of UNICEF work in that field. One called for decisive action ahead of the Climate Ambition Summit and COP28 and another urged the integration of climate awareness in water, sanitation and hygiene programmes. The Executive Director underscored the urgency of addressing the impacts of climate change for children.

20. A delegation highlighted its own contribution to UNICEF core funding and called on others to make similar commitments to improve the ratio of core resources as a proportion of total income. The delegation asked for clarification on how UNICEF would localize its approach in terms of mitigating the impact of crises on children, and asked UNICEF to elaborate on how the organization approached partnerships, especially at a local level. Highlighting the Global Development Initiative, another delegation welcomed more robust partnership-building, particularly South-South and triangular cooperation. The Executive Director underlined the importance of partnerships across the United Nations system, with the private sector and with other entities worldwide in order to amplify the impact made by UNICEF.

21. Multiple delegations commended UNICEF for its role in global health, particularly the pandemic response and vaccinations. A delegation highlighted the importance of UNICEF cooperation with multilateral partners and called for the

strengthening of that global health-care architecture. In response, the Executive Director underlined the importance of child vaccinations.

22. Multiple delegations expressed their support for and interest in strategies to narrow the digital divide. A delegation asked how UNICEF would ensure that all children had access to learning resources, including digital technology. In response, the Executive Director highlighted several UNICEF projects that were working to improve digital connectivity and access. The Executive Director expressed an openness to using new ideas and resources to bridge the digital divide.

23. Multiple delegations expressed concern for and solidarity with refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine as well as people in other fragile situations around the world. Delegations expressed alarm at the vulnerability of children and commended UNICEF efforts to address the needs of youth in those settings. They highlighted national efforts to implement child rights and stressed that collective responsibility was vital to addressing the global challenges faced by children.

24. Numerous delegations emphasized their commitment to humanitarian assistance, with some calling on the international community to support UNICEF efforts to do more to achieve a more sustainable future for children worldwide. On the humanitarian-development nexus, a delegation enquired about UNICEF efforts to link humanitarian and development programmes to fulfil the organization's dual mandate and another delegation stressed the importance of maintaining balance in the dual mandate.

25. Delegations commended UNICEF efforts to address gender disparities and to integrate gender equality in evaluations, but stressed the need for continued progress, both in advancing gender equality and in sexual and reproductive health and rights. A delegation praised UNICEF progress in implementing the Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, and identified mental health and psychosocial support as an area requiring further attention. The Executive Director acknowledged the vital importance of mental health and expressed her commitment to supporting the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.

26. A group of delegations called for UNICEF to pay more attention to girls' education, skills development, access to technology, protection, health and nutrition, as well as maintain its commitment to ending harmful practices such as child marriage. The group encouraged UNICEF to continue to report on its best practices, lessons learned, gaps and challenges, to enable the Executive Board to give better guidance. In response to comments about education, the Executive Director emphasized the need to get foundational learning back on track.

27. Another group of delegations highlighted the need for greater investment in health, education and social protection systems to ensure an equal chance in life for every child and to help Africa fully realize the potential of its demographic dividend. The group called for a redoubling of efforts: to prioritize children and allocate resources to get progress back on track; to explore new, sustainable and innovative solutions to climate change; and to prioritize adaptation funding and resources to address the consequences of climate change.

28. Delegations praised UNICEF staff for delivering life-saving assistance worldwide. Calling for increased efforts to create a safe environment for children around the world, delegations expressed concern for the worsening humanitarian situation and multitude of crises. In response, the Executive Director reiterated the commitment of UNICEF to all children everywhere and commended the dedication of UNICEF staff on the ground, highlighting the rewards of seeing children benefit from their work.

29. Multiple delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue to advance the United Nations development system reform process. A delegation highlighted the need for UNICEF to strengthen its collaboration with resident coordinators as part of the reform process.

30. Multiple delegations encouraged UNICEF to focus on reporting obligations, with a group of delegations calling specifically for more information on joint United Nations efforts, impacts, systems strengthening and cross-cutting issues. The group urged UNICEF to prepare for an analysis of results and progress over the entire period 2022–2025 and underscored the importance of timely and transparent reporting and accountability. In response, the Executive Director underscored the value of data and reporting in tracking progress and improving outcomes. She emphasized the need for better data collection and consistency and highlighted the work of the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti in learning from and sharing information around the world. She also reiterated the central importance of cooperation with other United Nations agencies.

31. A number of delegations commended UNICEF efforts to advocate for family-friendly policies, including parenting skills, maternity and parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare and child benefits. The Executive Director underlined the importance of education and discussed the intersection of gender issues with caregiving responsibilities.

32. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/6 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **B. Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action**

33. The Deputy Executive Director, Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations, introduced the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action ([E/ICEF/2023/14](#)), followed by the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, who presented it.

34. Multiple delegations commended UNICEF on its humanitarian action in 2022. Delegations praised UNICEF for its work with displaced communities and underlined the importance of its experience in coordinating with other United Nations agencies to tackle the root causes of humanitarian crises. Several delegations highlighted humanitarian emergencies in their respective countries and outlined their responses.

35. Numerous delegations expressed concerns regarding the multidimensional challenges caused by the increasing number, scale and severity of emergencies, and regarding the impact of such emergencies on people needing assistance and the humanitarian system itself. They pledged support to UNICEF in achieving its mandate and called for a scale-up of support for humanitarian interventions. A delegation asked how UNICEF could boost humanitarian assistance work through cooperation with in-country volunteer networks. Another delegation noted that the No Time to Waste Acceleration Plan 2022–2023 should be an integral part of the UNICEF action plan in response to the multiple crises.

36. Several delegations commended the strengthened UNICEF focus on accountability to affected populations. A delegation called for enhanced technical support and generalized use of feedback mechanisms, and another asked how UNICEF would ensure that accountability to affected populations was systematic in its programming. A delegation emphasized the need for documentation of child rights violations and ensuring accountability for perpetrators, and another called for UNICEF to step up data collection and analysis, particularly in disaster preparedness.

37. Multiple delegations called for long-term, sustainable solutions to climate-related disasters and for improved coherence and complementarity of humanitarian and development programmes to respond to short- and long-term needs.

38. A number of delegations welcomed UNICEF efforts on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and reiterated their zero tolerance in that regard, encouraging locally adapted mechanisms to support survivor-centred reporting and follow-up. A delegation welcomed the UNICEF institutional priority of fostering gender equality and inclusion in humanitarian preparedness response and recovery measures. Another noted that girls' and women's rights must be central to all humanitarian responses. In response, the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, reiterated the commitment of UNICEF to gender equality and disability inclusion.

39. A delegation expressed its hope that UNICEF would actively explore funding channels and encourage major donors to increase the percentage of core resources and bridge the humanitarian funding gap. The delegation said that UNICEF should pay attention to resource allocation, providing more resources to underfunded and protracted crises for livelihood and development. Another delegation stressed the importance of increased donor recognition and giving due attention to core donors to encourage others to provide more quality funding. A delegation called for more regular oral updates, including on UNICEF humanitarian work and the latest work with the World Health Organization and World Food Programme.

40. Numerous delegations commended UNICEF localization efforts, noting positive progress on overhead costs, including meeting the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent of funding towards local actors. A delegation called for increased efforts and a more holistic approach to localization, as well as more regular and open reporting on localization progress, with the integration of localization becoming a cross-cutting issue in evaluations. Another delegation requested an update on the technical note on localization. In the context of exponentially growing needs and an increasing funding gap, a delegation urged greater focus on common objectives, priorities and approaches in putting people at the heart of operations. The Director agreed to work towards more regular reporting on localization and noted that UNICEF had developed and finalized its localization strategy with cooperation and capacity strengthening at its core. The Deputy Executive Director, Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations, underscored the importance of localization, noting that next steps should include capacity transfer and empowering local organizations.

41. Multiple delegations welcomed progress in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and expressed interest in seeing it rolled out more broadly. A delegation encouraged a clear reflection of the nexus in all country programmes and plans and asked how UNICEF intended to further operationalize the nexus at the country level. Several delegations asked how UNICEF was balancing and managing priorities with growing needs and shrinking funding, such as by increasing early warning and early action work while safeguarding its life-saving mandate. The Deputy Executive Director noted that it was essential to invest in local systems at the decentralized level between crises. He described the nexus as an opportunity to get ahead of the curve, investing in systems that could withstand shocks.

42. Several delegations noted the progress made by UNICEF in its role as cluster lead and co-lead agency and encouraged the organization to focus efforts at the inter-agency level. A delegation asked when the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster guidance would be updated. A delegation expressed the expectation that UNICEF would prioritize the work of clusters and ensure their proper staffing. Another delegation encouraged systematic engagement with international financial institutions and further participation in the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework, with more sharing of sector- and cluster-specific methodologies.



43. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/7 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

### **C. Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025**

44. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, introduced the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025 (E/ICEF/2023/15), followed by the Associate Director, Gender Equality Programme Group, who presented it.

45. A group of delegations remarked on the bleak overall picture for gender equality. The group underlined the importance of UNICEF gender equality programming and praised the gender team for its tireless efforts and impressive results given the challenging context. The group called for more to be done, particularly for girls out of school and other disadvantaged groups. The group highlighted the need for a scale-up of interconnected programming and the importance of the UNICEF adolescent girls programme strategy. The group of delegations requested further information, including when UNICEF expected to reach the institutional benchmark of 15 per cent for gender-transformative expenditure, how to increase thematic funding on gender and how UNICEF was managing to deliver gender-transformative programmes in backsliding contexts such as Afghanistan and Iran (Islamic Republic of). In response, the Associate Director, Gender Equality Programme Group, indicated that the 15 per cent expenditure target was to be achieved by 2025 (noting that it had already been per the previous formula). She highlighted several active joint programmes, including on ending child marriage and gender-based violence, cash plus programmes, and building resilience and maintaining safe spaces and critical services for women and children in countries such as Afghanistan.

46. A delegation noted that only a quarter of country offices had developed Gender Action Plans by the end of 2022. The delegation expressed an interest in understanding the rationale for increased engagement of women- and girl-led organizations and in implementing gender-based violence risk mitigation efforts. They also asked how UNICEF was scaling up its response to child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and requested inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals in Gender Action Plans. Another delegation welcomed more information on how UNICEF worked with women's organizations as strategic partners. In response, the Associate Director outlined efforts to work with vulnerable girls and elaborated on how UNICEF formed strategic partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations. She spotlighted the UNICEF target of 10 per cent and then 15 per cent of partnerships being with women- and girl-led organizations (from the current level of 5 per cent) within the next two years, noting the modality of partnering with consortiums of women- and girl-led organizations to adhere to fiduciary risk standards.

47. A delegation outlined how sanctions had exerted pressure on their country and explained that children with rare diseases were unable to access necessary drugs, asking UNICEF to assist with that. In response, the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, confirmed that all humanitarian goods and supplies were exempt from sanctions and expressed willingness to discuss any issues relating to children's needs.

## **D. UNICEF programme cooperation**

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

48. The country programme document for Chile ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.16](#)) was considered by the Board.

49. In introductory remarks, the Regional Director for the Latin America and Caribbean region provided an overview of the socioeconomic situation of Chile, as well as outlined some of the challenges the country faced and how they disproportionately impacted children.

50. The delegate of Chile summarized the process and methods that had led to the new country programme for the period 2023–2026 and outlined the strategic priorities of Chile, emphasizing its support for United Nations goals and systems.

51. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/8 on a no-objection basis (see annex).

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

52. The Chair stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the extensions of ongoing country programme documents, as set out in document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.17](#). Those included the two-month extensions of country programmes for Cambodia and the Philippines, and a one-year extension of the country programme for Namibia; and a one-year extension of the country programme for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, following two consecutive one-year extensions.

53. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/9 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **E. Update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

54. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, introduced the update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse ([E/ICEF/2023/12](#)), followed by the Senior Adviser a.i., Safeguarding Office, who presented the report.

55. Multiple delegations expressed their appreciation of UNICEF efforts and achievements in that regard. The delegations encouraged continued system-wide collaboration for monitoring and prioritization of the issue. A group of delegations emphasized the importance of recurrent constructive dialogue and welcomed further strategic evaluation of UNICEF efforts and results, including a reporting format that compiled metrics from multiple sources and presented year-on-year progress. The group also encouraged UNICEF to further improve communities' knowledge of reporting on incidents.

56. A delegation welcomed additional details on country office staffing for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and encouraged information-sharing with the broader aid community. The delegation also welcomed an update on the establishment of the Chief Risk Officer position, looked forward to the release of the new Safeguarding Policy for 2023 and asked for more information on the tactic of establishing a standing pool of in-country investigators. The Senior Adviser a.i., Safeguarding Office, welcomed the suggestion of year-on-year reporting and outlined plans for improving and measuring staff understanding and perceptions.

57. Multiple delegations reiterated their zero tolerance of inaction and emphasized that protection efforts must be holistic, collective and cooperative. The delegations

welcomed ClearCheck and encouraged the use of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. A delegation asked how UNICEF planned to address staff discomfort at reporting sexual misconduct and fears about retaliation. The Senior Adviser a.i. said that safeguarding needed to permeate all programmes and operations to become a part of the organizational culture that guided staff decisions on a constant basis. She outlined how UNICEF was strengthening the system and the identification and reporting of safeguarding risks, with indicators making her feel confident of progress.

58. Several delegations expressed appreciation for continued efforts by UNICEF to build implementing partners' capacity, and asked about partners' safeguarding measures and how UNICEF intended to share rather than devolve risks, particularly with local non-governmental organization partners. The Senior Adviser a.i. noted that the majority of partners that UNICEF assessed were found to be low risk with high capacity, and added that capacity-building was an ongoing process to strengthen collective capacity to mitigate and prevent risk.

59. A delegation asked whether the allocated human and financial resources were sufficient, taking into account the number of reports and consequences of allegations. In response, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, emphasized the importance of sustained funding and said that there was a gap of \$50 million for ensuring that the investments in safeguarding were institutionalized and could continue, particularly in high-risk areas.

60. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/10 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **F. Update on organizational culture and diversity**

61. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, introduced the update on organizational culture and diversity ([E/ICEF/2023/13](#)) and the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, presented the update.

62. Multiple delegations thanked UNICEF for the update and its proactive efforts in creating a values-based culture that reflected the diversity of the children whom UNICEF served, and the leading role of UNICEF in the United Nations system as co-chair of the High-level Committee on Management working group on diversity, equity and inclusion.

63. Several delegations commended UNICEF efforts in gathering data and evidence on organizational culture and diversity, equity and inclusion. A delegation said that it would be useful to disaggregate key findings by gender, particularly considering that female respondents reported less trust in senior management and standards of conduct.

64. A group of delegations asked about the UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy and the new diversity, equity and inclusion advisory group. The Principal Adviser said that action plans for the Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy were under development. She expanded on the approach and elaborated on the role of the advisory group.

65. Numerous delegations welcomed UNICEF support for employee initiatives to contribute to inclusion. Delegations called for further action in various areas, including staff perceptions of psychological safety and trust; discrimination; feedback mechanisms, support and accountability for underperforming staff members; the disproportionate representation of women among those resigning; low numbers of reported cases of sexual harassment; and perceptions of insufficient action in response to the Global Staff Survey. A delegation also asked about the UNICEF strategy for applying behavioural science in culture change and how the organization planned to

monitor and evaluate its responses to the Global Staff Survey. In response, the Principal Adviser outlined the work on policy and systemic changes and the subsequent focus on individual-level behaviour change, and described how UNICEF was widening its approach to diversity to include issues such as disability and age or generational diversity. She outlined measures to follow up on the Global Staff Survey and emphasized that offices had been encouraged to include workplace culture as a priority in office management plans so that it was not an afterthought. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, underlined the importance of women in emergency duty stations and said that the organization was tackling the issue of women resigning on multiple fronts, including by improving family-friendly policies and making assignments more attractive.

66. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, referred to the UNICEF audit on performance management, a first of its kind in the United Nations system, and to the upcoming evaluation of human resources management, noting that those exercises would provide valuable new insights. Both the Deputy Executive Director and the Principal Adviser spoke to the issue of psychological safety and how UNICEF remained committed to facilitating and strengthening that.

67. A delegation asked how UNICEF was working to integrate its values and principles into staff performance assessments; turning new policies on caregiving into practice; and planning to fund its ambitious targets related to diversity. In response, the Principal Adviser noted that efforts were under way to achieve targets, including proactive outreach to underrepresented groups, using modalities such as United Nations volunteers or internships and partnering innovatively and creatively so that cost need not be an obstacle to progress.

68. A delegation asked about the main challenges that UNICEF faced in implementing policies and whether there was any assessment of how to achieve synergy with national policies. In response, the Principal Adviser focused on the decentralized nature of UNICEF, where staff surveys and regional, global and country management team meetings enabled coordination and consistency of application across UNICEF offices.

69. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/11 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **G. Evaluation reports and management responses**

### **Annual report for 2022 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management response**

70. The Director of Evaluation presented the annual report for 2022 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2023/18](#)), followed by the Director, Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2023/19](#)).

71. Numerous delegations welcomed the positive developments indicated in the annual report, including the increased number of evaluations and their increased geographic scope and consideration of cross-cutting issues. They expressed appreciation for the sharpening of quality assessments and the intention to conduct more evaluations at impact and outcome levels.

72. A group of delegations recognized that the number of evaluations covering gender had increased while also noting that the overall quality had declined. They urged UNICEF to increase the scope of analysis relating to gender equality and empowerment of women. The group expressed concern at the speed, scope and standard of management responses and emphasized that UNICEF management must

adequately respond to evaluation findings and recommendations. The group also expressed concern at the lateness of evaluations. The Director of Evaluation acknowledged the concerns and cited the effort in Ukraine as one reason for delays. He emphasized that the evaluation function had made a strategic choice to focus on increasing expenditure on national evaluation capacity development in response to a call by the Executive Board, in order to make real progress.

73. Multiple delegations expressed concern about the ongoing failure to achieve the 1 per cent funding target, including the 2022 reversal in progress. They urged UNICEF to continue working on improvements and develop a plan of action, and welcomed a reaffirmation of that target, while noting the challenges in meeting it.

74. A delegation noted the 2022 work to prioritize development of strategic evaluation partnerships, beginning with a dedicated strategy. The delegation highlighted the fact that UNICEF had explored becoming a formal partner in the Global Evaluation Initiative, among other international partnerships. The delegation expressed an interest in how those efforts were progressing and the perceived added value for partnerships in national evaluation capacity development and evidence synthesis that were under development in 2023.

75. Multiple delegations highlighted the need to keep use and usability in mind when expanding the range of evaluation products. They also called for UNICEF to recommit to filling gaps in evidence on operational priorities and answering questions that concretely improved work on the ground.

76. A group of delegations asked why only 70 per cent of expenditure reported under evaluations was directly spent on such evaluations. In response, the Director of Evaluation explained that there was a lack of clarity on what was and what was not evaluative, as well as a lack of guidance on how to code individual activities. The Director noted that spending on evaluation could be rushed at the end of a year and was therefore not always as meaningful as it could be, an issue that UNICEF was looking into.

77. A group of delegations raised questions about the drop in gender equality and women's empowerment in evaluations. The Director said the data in the annual report were intended as a starting point, and that understanding required a lot of qualitative follow-up, which was now under way. On the meaningful inclusion of gender in evaluations, he explained his belief that it was linked to the increasing number of evaluations. UNICEF had spread itself more thinly and that had affected the level of attention it was paying to certain crucial issues. He said that guidance existed for delving into such issues and that UNICEF would draw on its past experiences and work with partners, including Governments, to look at the collective evidence and work together towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and management response**

78. The Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation report ([E/ICEF/2023/20](#)) and the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2023/21](#)).

79. Numerous delegations welcomed the report and the management response, emphasizing the evaluation's significance in terms of learning from achievements and innovations as well as failures and catalysing change. The delegations highlighted some of the key findings of the evaluation and commended the fact that many of its recommendations had already been implemented.

80. Several delegations noted uneven mainstreaming of gender and equity dimensions and expressed their hope that UNICEF would learn from that and

prioritize accountability to affected populations in the future. A delegation urged UNICEF to strengthen the linkages between humanitarian and development actions and incorporate protection from sexual exploitation and abuse as well as gender and equity considerations in the planning, implementation and results reporting of all emergency response efforts. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, acknowledged the uneven mainstreaming of gender and equity dimensions and stressed that the organization was working on the matter and that progress was on track.

81. Multiple delegations said that they would welcome further information on findings relating to the global ethos of partnership and collaboration, both within and outside the United Nations. A delegation noted that UNICEF played a critical role in the COVID-19 health sector response, a role which went well beyond vaccine delivery. The delegation urged UNICEF to leverage that role to reinvigorate progress towards health-related Sustainable Development Goal targets. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, said that UNICEF teams were working with external partners to clarify roles and responsibilities for vaccines. He added that UNICEF offered various ideas and values, among them its commitment to keeping communities at the heart of any response. The Director of Evaluation noted that UNICEF was working collectively with United Nations partners to evaluate their support for Governments' progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

82. A delegation asked how UNICEF planned to further strengthen national evaluation capacity development efforts in areas affected by ongoing emergencies, drawing on the COVID-19 experience. Another delegation asked how UNICEF integrated its work on pandemic prevention, response and preparedness, and related recommendations, with the efforts made by the rest of the United Nations. The delegation also asked whether the evaluation involved interaction with, and reflected the opinion of, national authorities in the countries it covered. In response, the Director of Evaluation discussed the close evaluation partnerships that UNICEF maintained with all other United Nations agencies and noted that primary data collection for the COVID-19 evaluation was done remotely due to travel restrictions.

83. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/12 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **H. Draft revised evaluation policy of UNICEF**

84. The Director of Evaluation presented the draft revised evaluation policy (UNICEF/2023/EB/11).

85. Numerous delegations commended the incremental and consultative approach of the UNICEF evaluation function in developing the policy and its inclusion of the results of the recent peer review. Delegations concurred that the evaluation function was fit for purpose but asked that it continue to make progress in areas highlighted for improvement, including greater clarity in the definition, purpose and principles of evaluation, coverage standards, and the adequacy and predictability of human and financial resources. Delegations emphasized the need for complementarity between the evaluation function and other areas and positively acknowledged the commitment to seeking collaboration and coordination both within UNICEF and system-wide.

86. Multiple delegations emphasized the need for the function and its staff to have full independence, including at the decentralized level, and welcomed the fact that evaluation specialists would decide whether activities were evaluative exercises covered by the policy. In response, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, agreed that the independence of the Evaluation Office was its main strength.

87. Delegations asked UNICEF to draw up multi-annual evaluation plans, which would ensure that the most important issues were prioritized and delivered in a timely manner, and that resourcing requirements were made clear in advance. Delegations asked how impact evaluations could be systematically integrated to support targeted learning on key issues for the organization and the global community. Delegations also urged UNICEF to keep usability in mind when expanding the range of evaluation products and to retain a focus on producing evaluative results that could feed directly into strategic decision-making, both in programming and in work on the ground. The Director of Evaluation noted that UNICEF already had an impact evaluation strategy that addressed systematic evaluation in the policy. He agreed to take on board the feedback raised and to continue fine-tuning the policy in keeping with the incremental approach.

88. Multiple delegations urged UNICEF to meet the 1 per cent funding target and asked the organization to provide information on how that could be achieved, either in the final version of the policy or in implementing guidelines. In response, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, underscored her commitment to optimally and qualitatively meeting the 1 per cent target. She acknowledged some unpredictability in human resources due to a lack of core funding and underlined the importance of core resources for growing evaluation investments and staffing.

89. A number of delegations underlined the need for periodic assessments of progress and obstacles and the importance of revisiting evaluations to determine impact and lessons learned. The Director of Evaluation said that UNICEF needed to consistently evaluate the most strategically important issues for the organization, not necessarily increasing the number of evaluations every year but ensuring that the right evaluations looked at the right topics at the right time.

## **I. UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2022 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response**

### **UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2022 annual report to the Executive Board**

90. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, presented the 2022 annual report of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.4](#)), which was accompanied by an addendum that detailed the investigation cases closed in 2022 ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.4/Add.1](#)). He also briefly summarized the Office's strategic priorities for 2023. The Chair of the Audit Advisory Committee then discussed the results of the Committee's 2022 annual report. Following that, the management response to the 2022 annual report of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.5](#)) was introduced by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, and presented by the Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management.

91. Multiple delegations congratulated the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations on the annual report and emphasized the importance of strong and independent oversight functions. Several delegations noted the rise in investigations and encouraged UNICEF management to mobilize appropriate resources to cope with that.

92. A number of delegations urged UNICEF to reflect on and address gaps and shortcomings. A group of delegations called for more analysis in the annual report, including an overview of structural issues, trends and proactive investigations in high-risk areas. In response, the Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, pledged to improve the report in line with feedback, respecting confidentiality

considerations, and directed interested Board members to read the individual audit reports for more detailed information.

93. In relation to the Office's annual report, a delegation welcomed the prioritization of sexual exploitation and abuse cases and its explicit inclusion in next year's strategic road map. The delegation welcomed further information on the joined-up approaches that UNICEF intended to take on issues related to sexual exploitation and abuse. Another delegation noted an increase in reports of sexual exploitation and abuse cases involving implementing partner staff and welcomed additional analysis of that. The delegation also asked what changes UNICEF was making to its training programme to implementing partners to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, listed contributing factors for the rise in reporting, including increased trust, comfort and confidence in reporting, increased confidence in the investigative and adjudicative processes, and outreach campaigns.

94. Several delegations welcomed the management response and follow-up recommendations. A group of delegations welcomed in particular the acknowledgement by management that grant coordination could be improved, including communication with donors.

95. Numerous delegations commented on staffing levels, expressing the hope that adequate levels would be maintained with adequate resources and oversight to cope with the uptick in cases. In response, the Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, underlined the importance of that issue for management and confirmed management's commitment to ensuring that the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations had the resources required. He added that UNICEF management would continue to work with the Office on its proposal to budget non-staff costs in a more systematic way.

96. Many delegations thanked the Audit Advisory Committee for its annual report and insightful recommendations. A group of delegations said that it shared the Committee's concerns about the Senior Management Risk Committee, which did not meet in 2022; the annual organizational reports on risk, which were not prepared; and the risk appetite statements, which were not finalized. The group underscored the need for a systematic, transparent approach for risk management to accompany the increase in the scale, range of complexity of UNICEF operations and changing circumstances. A delegation welcomed the appointment of a Chief Risk Officer in the Office of the Executive Director and suggested periodic exchanges between the Chief Risk Officer and the Executive Board. Multiple delegations requested regular updates on progress. In response, the Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, said that the Chief Risk Officer would enhance the risk-management framework and develop a multi-year road map. He noted measures that had been taken to improve coverage and assured delegations that work on enterprise risk management was ongoing and that progress was on track.

97. A group of delegations noted the recommendations from the Audit Advisory Committee on the independence of the oversight functions within UNICEF and encouraged the organization to follow them. In response, the Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, noted that many recommendations had either been implemented or required ongoing attention. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, referred delegations to the Joint Inspection Unit's ongoing assessment of the Executive Board's governance and oversight functions, and explained that the results of that exercise would inform necessary updates to the charter of the Audit Advisory Committee, including in terms of direct reporting to the Executive Board.



98. A group of delegations noted the observation by the Audit Advisory Committee of the gradual increase in the proportion of audit report conclusions between 2017 and 2022 that had received generally satisfactory conclusions (up to 100 per cent in 2021). The group raised the possibility of overstated audit opinions, especially in high-risk contexts. In response, the Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, cautioned against drawing conclusions and identifying trends based on a few years of findings and said that the Office was constantly re-evaluating how it put forth ratings, with a degree of subjectivity as well as objectivity, and promised to take note of comments in terms of ratings in the coming year.

99. A group of delegations noted that the Audit Advisory Committee had been unable to express an opinion on the adequacy of internal audit coverage, as the draft internal audit workplan did not disclose an assurance gap. The group underlined the fact that information on assurance gaps added value and could indicate whether the Office was sufficiently resourced. In response, the Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, agreed that the subject was extremely important. He outlined the Office's audit risk assessment process and expressed the opinion that the role of the Office was to ensure adequate assurance to meet the risk tolerance determined by the organization.

100. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/13 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **J. Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022, and management response**

101. The Director, Ethics Office, presented the report ([E/ICEF/2023/16](#)), followed by the Director, Division of Human Resources, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2023/17](#)).

102. Numerous delegations recognized the ongoing work by UNICEF to strengthen its ethical and value-based culture and its independent ethics function. Delegations acknowledged the increase in the ethics services provided by the Ethics Office in 2022, and welcomed the systematic efforts of the Office to strengthen its training function and take a more strategic, proactive and needs-specific approach to training.

103. Multiple delegations highlighted the importance of providing sufficient, sustainable and long-term financial and staff resources to the Ethics Office and acknowledged the ability of the Ethics Office to provide services efficiently under current constraints. Delegations emphasized that the new positions approved by management were a good start but that more needed to be done. The delegations encouraged further collaboration with other multilateral organizations to support a harmonized approach within the United Nations system. In addition, delegations encouraged UNICEF to develop more structured management capacity-building and training and enquired about best practices relating to whistle-blower protection. A delegation asked whether UNICEF was doing anything specific to support a culture of psychological safety in the workplace.

104. In response, the Director, Ethics Office, emphasized that whistle-blowing protection and psychological safety and protection against retaliation were priorities for UNICEF and that those mandates were shared between the Ethics Office and other offices and divisions. Addressing issues in those areas could be done through examining information gaps (lack of information on where to go and when); listening gaps (perception of lack of follow-up actions when staff raise issues); and protection gaps (lack of coverage and sufficient protection of personnel under policies and practices). He outlined how the Ethics Office, along with other offices and divisions,

continued to bridge those gaps through various cross-divisional and multidimensional initiatives.

105. The Director, Division of Human Resources, emphasized the importance of fostering trust, respect and care. He reiterated the commitment of UNICEF to providing adequate resources and capacities to the organization's independent offices. He further noted that the limitation of core resources was a challenge and appreciated the commitment of some Member States to provide more core resources to UNICEF to support independent offices.

106. The Director, Division of Human Resources, acknowledged that the resources provided to the Ethics Office in 2022 and 2023 were interim in nature, and highlighted the importance of providing sustainable resources. He further stated that UNICEF would revisit the situation next year during the midterm review, and consider providing additional resources to the Ethics Office.

107. A delegation asked how long it would take for UNICEF to build the capacities of the entire staff when it came to ethics. In response, the Director, Ethics Office, emphasized the importance of shared accountability and said that the organization would work towards universally shared values for as long as needed. He added that UNICEF was focusing on locations where ethical challenges and risks to the individual and the organization were pronounced.

108. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/14 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **K. Preliminary assessment of the implementation of the World Bank instrument and oral management response**

109. The preliminary assessment was presented by the Partner, Environmental Social and Governance, and Deputy Head of Environmental Social and Governance, KPMG Islands Group. The Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, delivered the oral management response.

110. A group of delegations commended UNICEF on the successful implementation of the instrument thus far and the commitment to evidence-based decision-making and impartial reviews. The delegations thanked KPMG for the quality of the report. A delegation asked how KPMG had determined the success of the instrument if it had been unable to identify how much additional financing UNICEF had received because of its activities. The Partner explained that the assessment had looked for links between money deployed and impact, examining pledge revenue, projections for the next five years and allocations by fundraising channel, and looking at return on investment in the past, acknowledging that some numbers were projections.

111. A delegation noted that since the instrument was not yet fully developed, its full impact could not yet be measured. Several delegations concurred with the recommendation that a deeper assessment should be conducted when all relevant data became available. The Partner responded that, based on the intended purpose of the instrument, their evaluation and consultations with key stakeholders, the instrument had proven to be beneficial and was progressing in the right direction, and that the associated risks were well managed.

112. Multiple delegations questioned future plans and whether UNICEF was planning to continue with the current or another similar instrument. A delegation reiterated the importance of any future debt issuance being authorized by the General Assembly, with appropriate governance structures in place. Another delegation noted an interest in shifting the interest rate obligation away from country offices in the

future. In response, the Comptroller explained that repayments and interest were done on a pooling basis because the degree of fundraising maturity level differed in each country.

113. The Comptroller said that the instrument would probably set a precedent in terms of financing for development, acknowledging that old funding models would not allow UNICEF to achieve the child-centred Sustainable Development Goals. As to whether that instrument would be used again, the Comptroller emphasized that it was a pilot and said that any decision to make it a part of the UNICEF business would be a collective one. The Comptroller said that evaluations were ongoing to determine whether the cumulative income in those markets was increasing, in which case the instrument was working. He agreed that it would need a full impact assessment at the end of its term.

114. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue its innovative financing work to achieve maximum impact for children, welcoming further work on the child lens investing framework.

## **L. Update on implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system**

115. The Deputy Executive Director a.i., Partnerships, introduced the update, followed by the Director, Public Partnerships Division, who presented an update on UNICEF implementation of the United Nations development system reform.

116. Multiple delegations welcomed the progress made in coherence, cooperation and collective action at the country level and emphasized the pivotal role of resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, as well as the importance of UNICEF support for resident coordinator leadership. Delegations welcomed progress in implementing the renewed Management Accountability Framework and encouraged the United Nations development system to reduce duplication and generate synergies. Delegations raised queries pertaining to alignment of country programme documents with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, performance appraisals and the selection of United Nations country team members. In response, the Director, Public Partnerships Division, reiterated UNICEF support for the leadership of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system and its commitment to adhere to the Management Accountability Framework provisions.

117. Numerous delegations acknowledged substantive results but asked what could be done to ensure that evidence was collected and reported on and that coordination was fully integrated in operating procedures rather than an add-on. A delegation stressed the importance of cooperation between United Nations agencies in the post-pandemic context and highlighted the need for enhanced commitments from development States with respect to cooperation. The delegation urged the United Nations to improve complementarity and consistency to avoid overlap and asked what the key challenges in the field were in terms of repositioning the United Nations development system. In response, the Director, Public Partnerships Division, cited the Cooperation Framework as key to supporting synergies and reducing duplication. Working jointly, she said, had become the new normal. The Deputy Executive Director a.i., Partnerships, cited the critical role that United Nations country teams played at the onset of an emergency towards understanding the situation on the ground, establishing internal communication and good collaboration, and putting the United Nations value proposition at play.

118. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/15 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **M. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2022**

119. Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director a.i., Partnerships, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, presented the report (E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.3).

120. Several delegations thanked the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, for an excellent presentation and commended the results, in particular the contributions of the National Committees for UNICEF and the work of UNICEF country offices in private sector fundraising. Delegations acknowledged the significant increase in funding from the private sector. They also encouraged further efforts to raise funds from financially strong companies and welcomed future exchanges on innovative financing instruments. In response, the Deputy Executive Director a.i., Partnerships, expressed gratitude for the interest in innovative finance and expanded on its role in scaling results for children. She provided an example of how prefinancing had been successful with producers of ready-to-use therapeutic foods and acknowledged the role of guarantors and risk managers in helping to create multiple innovative partnerships, including with international financial institutions.

121. A delegation expressed interest in hearing more about the feasibility study for a joint private sector financing facility. Another delegation expressed concern at the decrease in the share of flexible funds. A delegation asked UNICEF to expand on collaboration with the private sector and investors to capitalize external and private investments for children's rights and empowerment. In response, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, described how UNICEF was looking at enlarging the scope of partnerships, acknowledging the risks that such action might entail given the complexities of the approach. She described how UNICEF was successfully injecting flexibility into donations by opening conversations with donors about the importance of flexible funding for equity. In response to a question about managing local currencies and exchange rates, the Director outlined the decentralized and structurally diversified model of UNICEF that allowed it to manage in times of economic constraints.

122. A delegation asked how UNICEF would continue to invest in country office fundraising. In response, the Director said that not every country office could have a fundraising operation and that economies of scale were necessary. She acknowledged that it was nonetheless a promising space that would require bespoke approaches and time to mature.

123. The representative for the Standing Group of National Committees highlighted some of the results contained in the report, noting that those were achieved despite fierce competition for resources. He highlighted key activities and initiatives, such as delivering policy changes that positively benefited children in 24 countries. He welcomed additional efforts to reduce operational and administrative costs to free up more core resources for country programmes.

124. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/16 under agenda item 18 (see annex).

## **N. Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association**

125. The Chairperson commended the unwavering dedication of UNICEF staff to the organization's mandate. He acknowledged the physical and psychological strain of serving the UNICEF mandate with such commitment and highlighted some of the support structures that were in place. He emphasized the need for people-centredness

in decision-taking, including those related to change processes at headquarters and field levels.

126. The Chairperson underlined the organization's zero tolerance for all forms of harassment and abuse of authority, expressing concern at ongoing fears of retaliation by staff in some offices.

127. The Chairperson welcomed the new OneHR Strategy and expressed his hope that it would catalyse the rethinking of some human resources processes. He noted that key areas such as recruitment, career development, mobility and rotation, and duty of care continued to require critical reviews and rethinking.

128. The Chairperson emphasized the importance of the support from Member States in pursuing key requests from the International Civil Service Commission in relation to more fairness on conditions of service for national staff and more sensitivity to the changing work landscape. In closing, he underlined how proud the Global Staff Association was of the UNICEF brand.

129. A group of delegations commended the results achieved and the work of the UNICEF Global Staff Association leadership team as well as Staff Association representatives in ensuring a safe and supportive work environment with a culture that encouraged people to speak out. The group acknowledged that creating such a culture required well-coordinated efforts from the whole system and pledged continued support to all UNICEF staff.

## **O. Other matters**

### **Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2023**

130. The provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2023 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

## **P. Adoption of draft decisions**

131. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2023/6 through 2023/16 (see annex). Decision 2023/8 was formally adopted under agenda item 6 (a).

## **Q. UNICEF Staff Team Awards and closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board**

132. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 2022 UNICEF Staff Team Awards, paying tribute to five teams that exemplified the very best of UNICEF.

133. The Executive Director, in her closing remarks, thanked delegations for a productive week and thanked the President of the Executive Board for her guidance and leadership. She thanked all members of the Executive Board and the Bureau for their support and engagement, and praised the work of the Office of the Secretary to the Board, the United Nations Secretariat and UNICEF staff who joined the meeting. She welcomed upcoming opportunities to ramp up advocacy and commended all UNICEF supporters for their financial contributions that enabled UNICEF to reach an all-time high in revenue in 2022. She acknowledged the work of the National Committees for UNICEF and looked ahead to accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and creating lasting, positive change for children.

134. In her closing remarks, the President commended colleagues and delegations on the fruitful discussions and deliberations. She focused on the collaborative process

that had led to the adoption by consensus of 11 decisions that cut across UNICEF work and expressed gratitude to the different parties that had played a role in their adoption, including the facilitators of the draft decisions, technical focal points and fellow Bureau members. She extended special thanks to the Executive Director and her senior management team for fostering real conversations, and praised the dedication and excellence of UNICEF management. She thanked the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before congratulating the recipients of the year's UNICEF Staff Team Awards. She ended the annual session by sharing an ode to UNICEF.

## Annex

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

**2023/6**

**Annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as the report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025; the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; the description of independent oversight functions/bodies in UNICEF; and the data companion and scorecard;

2. *Decides to* transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board;

3. *Takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, including the management responses to the four recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit intended for consideration by the Executive Board.

*Annual session  
16 June 2023*

**2023/7**

**Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2023/14);

2. *Calls upon* UNICEF to intensify its localization efforts to ensure strong and equitable local partnerships in full respect of humanitarian principles and in accordance with United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, covering quality funding, systemic capacity-building, meaningful participation of relevant local actors in humanitarian coordination and decision-making, and steps, as appropriate, towards more risk management, as part of a United Nations system-wide coordinated response;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to provide an oral update on its humanitarian action during the second regular session of the Executive Board starting from 2023 and from then on, to provide a humanitarian update during each session of the Executive Board;

4. *Also requests* UNICEF to provide an update on the progress made towards the implementation of the recommendations of its Humanitarian Review during the first regular session of 2024, including progress made on localization efforts.

*Annual session  
16 June 2023*

**2023/8**

**Country programme documents**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* that the country programme document, including aggregate indicative budget, for Chile ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.16](#)) was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 21 March to 10 April 2023;
2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme document, including aggregate indicative budget, for Chile ([E/ICEF/2023/P/L.16](#)).

*Annual session  
15 June 2023*

**2023/9**

**Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the two-month extensions of the country programmes for Cambodia and the Philippines, and the one-year extension of the country programme for Namibia, which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.17](#);
2. *Approves* the one-year extension of the country programme for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, following two consecutive one-year extensions, which is presented in table 2 of document [E/ICEF/2023/P/L.17](#).

*Annual session  
16 June 2023*

**2023/10**

**Update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the update provided by UNICEF on progress made on protecting against sexual exploitation and abuse;
2. *Requests* UNICEF to provide an update to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2024, for decision, on how the organization is preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse;
3. *Notes with appreciation*, recalling Executive Board decision 2022/6, the progress made and the need for continued system-wide efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse as well as to sexual harassment, as part of the “zero tolerance for inaction” approach, including ensuring that the required actions implemented at country, regional and global levels are properly resourced and deliver impact;
4. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to take action to ensure a victim/survivor-centred, system-wide and coherent approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, while leveraging its mandate, and to continue to foster an inclusive and respectful organizational culture where all personnel are empowered and encouraged to report sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;



5. *Encourages* UNICEF in this regard to continue to report to the Executive Board about all cases in a transparent and accountable manner, and to ensure that reporting mechanisms are safe, inclusive and victim/survivor-centred, and to strengthen its efforts in whistle-blower protection against retaliation;

6. *Also encourages* UNICEF to continue to strive for inter-agency harmonization of reporting, and in this regard requests UNICEF to develop a more uniform template for future reports on this topic to be shared with the Executive Board, to better track year-on-year progress against indicators, allow for enhanced comparison of reports, and continue to gain a more strategic understanding of the results, impact and organizational culture change achieved from its efforts and activities;

7. *Further encourages* UNICEF to further increase its system-wide collaboration efforts to improve coordination, reporting and transparency and to work together effectively with other United Nations entities at country, regional and global levels to ensure optimal learning from lessons learned and best practices from the entire United Nations system;

8. *Welcomes* the continued use of ClearCheck, and invites UNICEF to examine how ClearCheck and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme can be used to complement each other to further improve vetting, and to provide an update to the Executive Board;

9. *Encourages* UNICEF to consider piloting the Scheme and to report any results within existing reporting;

10. *Notes with appreciation* UNICEF efforts to conduct risk assessments in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse; to work with implementing partners to assess and support their capacity to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and to address victims'/survivors' rights to support and assistance in accordance with the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

*Annual session  
16 June 2023*

## **2023/11**

### **Update on organizational culture and diversity**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the update provided by UNICEF on the progress made to make its organizational culture more values-based and inclusive;

2. *Also welcomes* the utilization of an evidence-based and data-driven approach in this regard and encourages UNICEF to focus measures where challenges persist, including on dedicating sufficient time to workplace culture and diversity, equity and inclusion issues, on the pace and visibility of progress on action taken by UNICEF, and on enhancing levels of psychological safety and trust;

3. *Commends* UNICEF on the publication of its first employee separation report, notes with concern the disproportionate representation of women among those resigning from UNICEF during the reporting period, and recommends that UNICEF continue to take action to address this issue;

4. *Requests* UNICEF to provide an update to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2024, as an item for decision, on how the organization is improving organizational culture and on its action to prevent and respond to all forms of

discrimination, including racism and racial discrimination, and to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion;

5. *Also requests* UNICEF to take further measures with a view to improving geographical representation and gender balance across the UNICEF workforce, and report back to the Board, within existing reporting, on steps taken in that regard;

6. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen capacities of staff in supervisory roles in a more systematic manner, including their people management skills, in order to help managers practise the core values of UNICEF and be more effective role models for all staff.

*Annual session*  
*16 June 2023*

## **2023/12**

### **Evaluation reports and management responses**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2022 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2023/18](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2023/19](#));

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to take the necessary steps to further strengthen the evaluation function, including by ensuring the timely implementation of management response actions;

3. *Recommends* that UNICEF include in the revised evaluation policy a timely evaluation of the modifications to the set-up of the evaluation function at country and regional levels as proposed, and if these modifications have been able to fully ensure the independence of evaluation staff;

4. *Takes note with great concern* of the significant decrease in overall evaluation expenditure to 0.59 per cent of total programme expenditure in 2022, which jeopardizes progress towards the 1 per cent funding target;

5. *Welcomes* the evaluation function's continuous focus on outcome- and impact-level evaluations as well as national evaluation capacity development, and encourages UNICEF to ensure that these types of evaluations and initiatives are firmly anchored in the revised evaluation policy and that further work and initiatives in those areas are pursued;

6. *Invites* UNICEF to seek to substantively engage programme countries during the implementation, including through related action plans, of findings and recommendations of the evaluation function and corresponding ex-post assessments at country level as relevant;

7. *Notes with concern* that the extent to which gender equality and the empowerment of women have been meaningfully integrated into the scope of the analysis has declined, as has the overall performance of UNICEF under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and urges UNICEF to increase efforts regarding these matters in its evaluations;

8. *Takes note* of the evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, its summary ([E/ICEF/2023/20](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2023/21](#));

9. *Recognizes* UNICEF leadership in the global COVID-19 vaccine delivery effort, and its wide-ranging contributions to the broader global health response to the pandemic, beyond vaccine delivery;

10. *Notes with appreciation* the completion and transition of the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership and the critical role of UNICEF in intensified pandemic recovery efforts, within its mandate, towards improving the health and well-being of children and mothers;

11. *Requests* UNICEF to update the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2024 on the implementation of the evaluation's recommendations as well as the ongoing COVID-19 transition and recovery efforts being implemented by UNICEF, including the following:

(a) Lessons learned and best practices distilled from the work of the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership, and how these will be applied to strengthen recovery efforts and inform future public health emergency preparedness;

(b) UNICEF urgent efforts to accelerate progress on maternal and child survival and health, and the related health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025; and

(c) UNICEF assistance to countries to ensure that health system improvements made through COVID-19 response investments are fully leveraged and sustained to build the primary health-care capacities needed to accelerate recovery efforts and to better detect, prevent and respond to future pandemic threats.

*Annual session*  
*16 June 2023*

### **2023/13**

#### **UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2022 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response**

##### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2022 annual report to the Executive Board ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.4](#)), its addendum ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.4/Add.1](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.5](#)), as well as the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2022 annual report to the Executive Board, and welcomes the overall opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and controls;

2. *Expresses* its continuing support for the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and reiterates the importance of its full independence and direct access to the Executive Board;

3. *Commends* UNICEF on its high rate of implementation of audit recommendations, and encourages ongoing focus on timely implementation and closure of recommendations;

4. *Recalls* paragraph 4 of its decision 2022/21, reiterates the importance of the full independence of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, and reaffirms the current practice that the Office comply with the standards of the International Professional Practice Framework by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the Uniform Principles and Guidelines for Investigation;

5. *Also recalls* its decision 2022/15 and requests UNICEF to provide sufficient staff and non-post budget for audit and investigation functions;

6. *Requests* that the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations organize an annual closed briefing to the Executive Board to share the annual workplan, the consolidated risk assessment, and any updates and concerns related to budget and staffing;

7. *Recalls* its decisions 2022/15 and 2022/21 on more regular closed briefings with the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations on potential red flags, emerging risks and control issues, audit findings and the status of investigations, with due regard to confidentiality and privacy;

8. *Requests* the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations to further improve its annual report by including substantive analysis of findings and providing an overview of strategic and systemic issues and trends, and encourages the Office to continue to expand its proactive approach in high-risk areas that are susceptible to fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing and to include a discussion of these efforts in its annual report;

9. *Also requests* the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee to present its annual report and key considerations to the Executive Board at the annual session;

10. *Encourages* the management of UNICEF to ensure better geographical representation and continue to strive for gender balance in the composition of the Committee membership;

11. *Recalls* its decision 2022/21 on the self-assessment of the independence of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and requests an update from UNICEF to the Executive Board in writing, at the second regular session of 2023, on the status of implementation of the recommendations included in the self-assessment of the independence of the Office, and also requests UNICEF to provide explanations for any recommendations that have not been fully implemented or agreed to by management;

12. *Requests* UNICEF to include an item for decision, at the first regular session of 2024, on the development of an overarching system for enterprise risk management, including an update on progress on the recommendations from the internal audit of enterprise risk management and the Chief Risk Officer's initial assessment of the UNICEF risk management system.

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## **2023/14**

### **Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022, and management response**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022 (E/ICEF/2023/16) and its management response (E/ICEF/2023/17);

2. *Recalls* paragraph 4 of its decision 2022/14, and requests UNICEF to ensure that the Ethics Office can adequately execute its mandate in a sustainable manner by providing sufficient staff and non-post budget to the Ethics Office, based on a needs assessment.

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2023/15

**Update on implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the update provided by UNICEF on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and related mandates on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

2. *Also welcomes* the commitment of UNICEF to the United Nations development system repositioning and encourages UNICEF to continue to work closely with other United Nations development system entities, under the leadership of the resident coordinator in the country, to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and national plans, needs and priorities;

3. *Recalls* its decision 2022/16 and requests UNICEF to continue to implement resolutions [72/279](#), [75/233](#) and [76/4](#), and to support the efforts of the United Nations development system in implementing related mandates;

4. *Calls upon* UNICEF to strengthen efforts to implement the Management and Accountability Framework, notes the evolving nature of the Framework and calls upon the organization to share its experiences in implementing the Framework at all levels;

5. *Welcomes* that, in accordance with decision 2022/16, the update includes information from the country and regional levels on the implementation of United Nations development system reform, and requests UNICEF to continue to include this in the reporting;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to report annually on the complete United Nations development system reform checklist as an annex to the information note on implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF to continue to strive for inter-agency harmonization of reporting on entity-specific implementation efforts and results of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, including improved delivery of development programming at the country level;

8. *Recalls* paragraph 5 of its decision 2022/16, and requests UNICEF to strengthen collaboration in joint analysis, needs assessments, planning, including collective outcomes, and programme delivery, and update the Executive Board within existing reporting mechanisms;

9. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to update the Executive Board annually on its implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system and to continue to include this as an item for decision at the annual session.

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**2023/16**

**Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended  
31 December 2022**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2022 ([E/ICEF/2023/AB/L.3](#)) and commends UNICEF and the National Committees for UNICEF for positive results in major income streams from the private sector;

2. *Takes note* that the revenue figures presented in this report are subject to external audit and that the non-financial results are indicative;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue its engagement with the private sector and to more thoroughly report on innovative financing, including on risk management strategies, within existing reporting.

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