Oral update on the work of the National Committees for UNICEF
6 February 2024

Executive Director Russell, Mr. President, Executive Board Members and Delegations, UNICEF colleagues and National Committee friends ...

I speak to you today on behalf of the 33 National Committees of UNICEF. We represent the interests of UNICEF in countries and territories whose private and public resources are responsible for a majority of UNICEF’s support. We deliver the private-sector income — $1.5 billion in 2023 — that is essential to UNICEF’s core and programmatic resources and inspire, through our public outreach and advocacy, the resource commitments made by our governments.

Our work, of course, is much broader than generating income. In fact, the foundation of our work is influence — influencing the public, leaders in the private sector and government, and others to care about the rights of children and see UNICEF as the means to deliver results for them. At a time of increasing polarization that challenges the core values of UNICEF, we strengthen our societies by promoting multilateralism, cooperation, human rights, non-discrimination and justice for every child.

And, yes, we fundraise, while also engaging in public education, thought leadership, media outreach, mobilization of youth and influencers, advocacy to policymakers, research, and initiatives like Child Friendly Cities.

The stronger the National Committees are, the more influence we have; the more influence we have, the more results we can help deliver for children. Our request to the Executive Board is to encourage UNICEF to continue the work it does to support National Committees to become even stronger.

I want to share four examples of how our influence produces results.

Our influence generates regular resources—like those that support key UNICEF staff such as the chief of education in Rwanda. His analysis of high dropout rates in primary schools supported the Ministry of Finance in developing an investment case on how better education will result in savings in future years.

Our influence secures other resources—like the program grants that have made possible a successful child protection program in India that since 2018 has improved the quality of care for children living in institutions and advanced alternative care practices.

Our influence, in coordination with UNICEF, produces new child-friendly policies and programs in our countries and territories —as happened in Slovenia. The National Committee’s analysis of the needs of children inspired the government to increase its budget for mental health services and added programs for parents and caregivers.

Our influence inspires young people to action—as was the case in Sweden, where the National Committee coordinated the work of 30 civil society organizations to support youth in developing their own report highlighting the most pressing child rights issues in the country.
The work of National Committees to foster a commitment to child rights and a positive perception of UNICEF in our countries is essential if we are to advance our collective mission. We remain deeply committed to this work. Thank you for supporting us.

Michael Nyenhuis

Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF