

National Statement by Sweden

UNICEF Executive Board Annual session 2024, 11–14 June 2024

Item 3 Report on the midterm review and Annual report of the ED

Mr/Madam President,

Thank you for giving me the floor and for the comprehensive update on the midterm review and the annual report of the Executive Director. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for UNICEF's tireless work in defending and advancing the rights of children. Your broad presence on the ground, with operations in more than 190 countries and territories, makes a real difference in children's lives – every day.

Let me also begin by highlighting the organisation's humanitarian action. Your staff and your partners often work under extremely challenging circumstances to reach out to children in Ukraine, in Gaza – and worldwide. This work saves lives, alleviates suffering, and upholds the human dignity of children in armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies. We see what you do, and you have our support.

Sweden is a long-term partner of UNICEF, contributing with flexible, multi-year funding to the organisation's regular resources, but also with flexible humanitarian funding. This enables UNICEF to rapidly address emerging and worsening crises and is a prerequisite to be able to respond rapidly or scale up in new or worsening crises.

As core resources are growing scarcer, we would like to see more donors and Member States stepping up and contributing with flexible funding. We also welcome more flexible funding from private sector partners. This enables UNICEF to be fast and flexible and bring their operations to scale when needed, such as in Gaza and Ukraine, but also to uphold essential functions such as audit, investigations, evaluations, and risk management.

Sweden supports UNICEF not only with core support, but also with support to the organisation's thematic funds, and through funding to UNICEF's country programs. The latter is a modality that we would welcome more donors to consider.

We welcome the midterm review of the strategic plan, and the fact that most targets are on track. However, looking at the child related indicators in the SDGs, progress is unfortunately too slow. The wellbeing of children is threatened by conflicts and climate related challenges, but also by push-back on human rights, including the rights of children and particularly girls. UNICEF has an important normative role here – in partner countries and in multilateral fora. Sweden supports you in this work.

Sweden also welcomes the crosscutting focus on girls and adolescent girls in all the result areas of the strategic plan and would especially like to emphasise the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In the MTR, we take note of WASH-indicators lagging behind and would like to hear a bit more from UNICEF how the organisation is planning to strengthen results in this area in the remaining years of the strategic plan.

To accelerate progress in reaching the SDGs, it will be necessary to work in new ways. Innovations and new technologies, including AI, are some of the tools and Sweden is proud to host UNICEF's global Office of Innovation, whose work is crucial in finding and testing new solutions, as well as finding new ways to finance development going forward. Another important aspect and platform for achieving the SDGs is the Global Digital Compact, where Zambia and Sweden are co-facilitators in a process to find new digital ways to work – and develop – together.

To be truly efficient, we have to work in coordination. Therefore, Sweden sees UN reform as key for success. We count on UNICEF as a major player in so many contexts and countries, to take the lead in further strengthening the reform to become One UN.

In closing, let me reiterate our close and long-standing partnership. Sweden promises to continue to support you – and push you – to continue to deliver results and make a concrete difference for children all over the world.

Thank you.