

Statement of H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board, 2024

11 June 2024, 10 am – 1 pm

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Executive Board for his opening statement. I also thank the Executive Director, Ms. Catherine Russell, for her comprehensive overview of the activities of the UNICEF and sharing her priorities amidst the multiple global challenges.

Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

We express our concern that the protracted conflicts and deeply challenging circumstances continued through 2023 and over 450 million children live in the conflict zones across the world. Gaza is taking a catastrophic toll on children where more than 14,000 children have reportedly been killed. Around 1.7 million people in Gaza strip have been displaced – half of them are children. Child rights are under attack and the world fails to protect them from the danger of war.

Mr. President,

With the limited time that we have, allow me to raise a few points:

First, the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of UNICEF reveals that the global crises have a negative impact on the works of UNICEF and made it difficult to pursue long-term development in the countries grappling with crises. The compounding nature of crises caused further setbacks in reducing child poverty and learning loss. The consequences of the policy choices that perpetuate

the underinvestment in children along with the toll of the crises, are evident in the lack of progress towards child-related indicators.

What approach does UNICEF pursue to respond to the findings of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to ensure achieving the targets?

Second, South Asia is the home to 290 million child brides, having the highest number of child marriages in the world. Debilitating gender norms are holding back girls from achieving their full potential, making inequalities and inequities more apparent. Addressing these injustices and violations of child rights require concerted efforts of all the relevant stakeholders including the UN entities.

We would like to hear more on the region and country specific strategies of UNICEF in addressing child marriages and other harmful practices in the context of child rights violations and discrimination against women and children in South Asia.

Finally, this coming September, the Summit of the Future takes place, bringing world leaders together to forge a new international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future. It can be seen as a vital opportunity to accelerate efforts towards progress on the SDGs, increasing support to the most marginalized children, keeping children safe from conflict and impact of climate change.

In this context, how UNICEF is planning to leverage its leadership in strengthening international solidarity in advancing the child rights and addressing the future challenges?

I thank you all.