

**JOINT INTERVENTION PRESENTED BY MEXICO IN THE
ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD
(ITEM 7: UPDATE ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE)**

New York, June 7 2024

Thank you Mister President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, the EU as a donor and my country, Mexico.

Mister president, let me begin by extending our appreciation for the continued efforts of UNICEF on ensuring the prevention of, protection from and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEAH), including protection from retaliation when reporting cases.

We particularly recognize the ongoing work to ensure that investigations and support are increasingly victim/survivor-centered, and that safe and accessible channels to report SEAH have expanded and are increasingly used. We also welcome that UNICEF will – this year - explore the feasibility of becoming part of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme as part of a comprehensive

baseline assessment of UNICEF's human resources safeguarding practices.

With strong policies and strategies in place, ensuring the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse remains high on the agenda requires further institutionalization of SEAH prevention and response. We welcome that SEAH-related risks have been incorporated into enterprise risk management systems or safeguarding mechanisms. Additionally, this institutionalization should include sufficient resourcing at all levels, as well as visible and consistent commitment from senior leadership to create a safe and empowered speak-out organizational culture of zero tolerance for inaction on SEAH.

We invite UNICEF to further reflect on how to 'set the tone at the top' and how this translates into human and financial resource allocation, specifically at the country level. This includes support for joint efforts to eradicate social and cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based power imbalances and promote harmful ideals of gender expression that can create a culture in which SEAH is normalized or excused.

We have in this room often agreed and emphasized that PSEAH is not a one-agency job. We commend the work already done, but still see opportunities for deepened interagency collaboration, particularly at country level, for example on risk management and community engagement, which will lead to greater effectiveness overall.

The joint efforts of UNICEF and other agencies to develop the harmonized reporting template are highly appreciated. This helps us better interpret and compare the progress made by each

agency. In turn, we ask the agencies to use this harmonized reporting to enhance learning, identify best practices and deepen interagency collaboration and dialogue. We would also encourage further aligning the PSEAH action plans of each agency and the harmonized reporting template; as well as strengthening coordination with other UN agencies, including Geneva-based agencies, on PSEAH.

In the spirit of better understanding where to focus our support, we would also like to ask UNICEF what they consider the most prevalent challenges in their current work on PSEAH, as well as areas of successes. We suggest that an interagency synthesis on these challenges and successes could be included in future reporting, for us to collectively strengthen PSEAH efforts further and ensure maximum impact.

Effective engagement with implementing partners remains crucial. We ask UNICEF to continue to invest in joint capacity building of implementing partners on PSEAH, especially where this capacity is assessed as insufficient. UNICEF's work on this serves as a positive example for other UN agencies.

We appreciate UNICEF's new Policy on Safeguarding. Importantly, the policy stresses the fact that everyone at UNICEF, regardless of their role, has safeguarding responsibilities, in both their professional and personal lives. We applaud UNICEF for advancing safeguarding, including the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, as an organizational priority. Does UNICEF have plans to share this policy and the lessons learned that led to the development of this policy with other UN agencies?

We welcome UNICEF's work on the development of a global framework for cooperation with Governments on PSEA. We would welcome further information on plans to finalize and roll out the revised Framework in 2024.

We do note with concern that the percentage of country offices that have a holistic system in place to prevent and respond to SEA is 56%. Although this is up from the 50% in 2022, it lags behind the 2023 milestone of 65%. What is UNICEF planning to do to increase this number and scale up reporting on SEA cases in country offices?

Thank you.