

## **Joint Statement delivered by Sweden**

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

### **Item 4 Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action**

Mr/Madam President,

I present this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Malta, Norway, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain Switzerland, the United Kingdom, United States and my own country, Sweden.

We thank UNICEF for the presentation of the annual report on humanitarian action and for the organisation's important response to humanitarian emergencies all over the world. In Ukraine, in Gaza, but also in so many countries and contexts that do not make it to the news headlines, such as Afghanistan, the DRC, Ethiopia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The work by you and your partners often represents the difference between life and death. We are aware of the very difficult circumstances that your staff work in, and the importance that UNICEF attaches to the duty of care and mental health of its own staff. Let us in this way express our admiration and appreciation for the work of your staff members around the world as well as all humanitarian personnel in the field.

We take note of the critical obstacles to a principled humanitarian response mentioned in the annual report, such as new, continuing, and intensifying access constraints. We strongly call on all actors to respect international humanitarian law – in all contexts, in all circumstances and all the time.

We also note the mentioning of obstacles due to a severely constrained funding environment. This means that UNICEF and other partners have to prioritize even more, focusing on those most in need of humanitarian

assistance. We know that flexible, predictable, and multi-year funding makes it possible for UNICEF to respond rapidly or scale up in new or worsening crises. We invite more Member States, as well as the private sector, to provide a considerable share of their humanitarian financing as quality funding, in particular flexible funding given that humanitarian needs continue to grow in magnitude and severity in many parts of the world. We already do what we can on our side to address the financing situation – what more can be done from UNICEF’s side? How does the organisation work with prioritization given the diminishing of financing and the growing needs? How do you continue to expand the donor base? And what is your strategy specifically on increasing flexible funding?

We appreciate the progress that UNICEF is making towards the Grand Bargain commitments and encourage the organisation to strengthen mechanisms for accountability to affected populations. We note that UNICEF provides more funding to local and national actors than any other major humanitarian UN agency and encourage UNICEF to continue with this model by cascading even further quality funding and shifting decision-making to local partners to empower affected populations and deliver services effectively.

We also underline the need to continue to strengthen localisation in a meaningful way, including through building capacity of local partners and further increasing the work with women-led organizations, involving them meaningfully in the design and implementation of projects, as well as the sharing of overheads. What do you still see as the most important areas for progress with regards to localisation? And how do you in particular ensure local and national actors have more of a seat at the table when it comes to decision-making and leadership?

We welcome the new framework for anticipatory action, for increased investments in disaster risk reduction, as well as an HDP-nexus approach that promotes the joined-up analysis and planning of responses across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum. This will be pivotal work in a world where more and more children are affected by climate change. We encourage UNICEF to continue working with OCHA and other UN agencies on

Anticipatory Action frameworks and to further deepen its relationship with Multilateral Development Banks.

We appreciate the steps that UNICEF has taken to invest in the Cluster System as a necessary approach to engage with local actors and to maximise the funding of all partners. Therefore, we encourage UNICEF to continue funding positions and training staff in this critical role.

We remind UNICEF of the importance of including protection in all its humanitarian action, to integrate a gender perspective in all its efforts, and to use intersectoral data to identify and support the most vulnerable wherever they may be.

We welcome and encourage an even closer collaboration with other UN organizations in humanitarian action – including with OCHA on humanitarian reform efforts – thus leveraging the comparative advantages of the respective organizations. Such collaboration goes hand in hand with efficiency gains.

Let us make sure that we, together, respond to the needs of children even under the most dire circumstances and extreme conditions. Let us never leave any child behind.

Thank you.