

Joint Statement by the bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board

Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

Tuesday, June 11 2024

Mr. President,
Executive Director Catherine Russell,
Distinguished members of the Executive Board, Excellencies, Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to deliver these remarks on behalf of the Executive Board bureau members – Austria, the Dominican Republic, Rwanda, Tajikistan, and my own country Bulgaria.

I would like to start by thanking Executive Director Russell for her thorough presentation, highlighting UNICEF's unwavering commitment to children worldwide. On behalf of the Bureau, I would like to highlight our appreciation for the work of all UNICEF staff, both here in New York and in the field, for their relentless dedication to the cause of children's welfare.

We recognize that children globally face numerous challenges, including poverty, limited access to quality education and healthcare, violence, exploitation, discrimination, displacement, trafficking, and lack of clean water and sanitation. Tragically, their vulnerability makes children more likely to suffer the consequences of any hardship that societies face. Many of the hardships that children faced over the past year have persisted during the first half of 2024. Therefore, we must address the significant challenges posed by humanitarian emergencies in conflict situations around the world.

We are committed to doing our part to support UNICEF's efforts in helping every child overcome barriers and providing lifesaving support to compensate for lacking educational resources, infrastructure, and qualified teachers, perpetuating cycles of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, fragile healthcare systems, and other threats to children's lives, not least girls and those from marginalized communities.

As elaborated in UNICEF's annual report on humanitarian action, in 2023, an alarming number of children faced humanitarian crises where their fundamental rights to survival, protection, healthcare, education, and clean water were neglected or attacked, especially in conflict zones. Natural disasters and climate emergencies worsened these conditions. Despite not receiving all the necessary funding to address these, UNICEF and its partners overcame significant obstacles to achieve vital outcomes such as providing clean water to 42.4 million people, vaccinating 32.4 million children against measles, treating malnutrition in 118.6 million children, and facilitating education for 17.7 million children, just to name a few. As bureau members, we are committed to

supporting UNICEF in addressing these challenges and in that context, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to predictable contributions to UNICEF's core resources.

Mr. President,

Forging innovative partnerships and leveraging resources are crucial. As bureau members of the UNICEF Executive Board, we are dedicated to maintaining—and where necessary—improving efficiency and effectiveness. In this context, we appreciate the presentation of the JIU report and its review of the Executive Board's governance and oversight functions, which we look forward to discussing during this Annual Session.

Moreover, the UNICEF Gender Action Plan (GAP) Annual Report for 2024 illustrates the entity's ongoing efforts to promote gender equality across its global operations. We commend these endeavors, as these are not only instrumental in the empowerment and the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls but also pivotal in nurturing global socio-economic progress.

The upcoming Summit of the Future is a great opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to children's rights and collectively address the challenges they face. We would like to call upon all member states to support the inclusion of language on children's rights in the Declaration of the Future and particularly chapter 4.

Additionally, the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 provides valuable insights, highlighting the Fund's efforts to meet the needs of millions of children and families affected by conflicts, climate events, displacement, and health crises.

Allow me to end on an optimistic note. I would like to invite all of you to join us at the inaugural International Day of Play (IDOP) celebration today starting at 1:15 PM at the Trusteeship Chamber. Co-organized by the Core Group that led the process of adopting the resolution to proclaim this new international day, as well as UNICEF and UNESCO, this event celebrates the critical role of play in human development and aims to promote the right to play through interactive activities and discussions. I am proud of Bulgaria's role in this important international day and hope to see many of you there.

Thank you.