

**Statement of Françoise Chandler  
Chairperson, UNICEF Global Staff Association  
Annual Session of the UNICEF Executive Board  
13 June 2024**

Honorable President, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board, Our Executive Director, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I address you today with profound gratitude on behalf of UNICEF's dedicated staff, acknowledging your unwavering commitment to our mission despite persistent challenges.

Over the past year, our personnel have confronted an increasing number of crises. They have faced immense challenges, including injury, death of family members, and displacement in locations such as Palestine, Haiti, Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan. Yet, they have displayed remarkable resilience and selflessness, delivering essential services to women and children worldwide and supporting other staff in need. These acts of sacrifice are sustained by the steadfast support and solidarity of Member States, for which we are deeply grateful.

For those working in high-risk or conflict-affected areas, concerns about personal safety and security are paramount. Ensuring that staff have adequate protection and support in these environments is a key concern. Our staff greatly appreciate our Executive Director's stand against the brutal impact of these crises on children, our colleagues, and the civilian population at large.

During these commendable efforts, our workforce endures considerable mental and psychological strain. Issues such as stress and burnout are significant concerns for UNICEF staff, which we should endeavor to prevent. Our commitment to service persists, but it is crucial to address the ongoing tension, particularly for our valued National Staff working in hardship duty stations. The Global Staff Association advocates for fairness in conditions of service of the National Staff category. We must implement a uniform approach to staff support and establish a pre-approved list of benefits in assisting national staff during a crisis to avoid extensive delays.

I would like to bring to your attention a developing trend highlighted in the recent report from the Office of the Ombudsman: the rise in incidents of reprisals and retaliation against staff. This increase is alarming and underscores the urgent need to address this issue that creates an environment of fear and distrust, where staff members feel unsafe to report misconduct, raise concerns, or offer constructive feedback. Psychological safety is crucial for a healthy and productive workplace.

Despite achieved organizational culture transformations, incidents persist. We value the recent launch of the HR evaluation, and we strongly believe that five years after the Independent Taskforce report, it is essential to conduct an external evaluation to assess our progress in implementing its recommendations. We need to evaluate how UNICEF handles issues such as sexual harassment and abuse of authority. We seek innovative and firm responses to remove

barriers, promote desired behaviors, and ensure accessible and functional support structures. An external review of the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place, the treatment of complainants, alleged offenders, and the support available to staff will provide valuable insights and ensure we are on the right path to achieving our goals.

We must empower the Ethics Office to effectively implement robust anti-retaliation support systems that include accountability at all levels. This should encompass clear and effective reporting mechanisms and stringent protections for whistleblowers.

The Global Staff Association holds a deep commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion within UNICEF. Our organization thrives on the rich variety of perspectives, experiences, and talents that our diverse workforce brings. Let us remember that diversity and inclusion are not just organizational imperatives but moral ones. However, recent surveys and staff feedback have highlighted ongoing challenges that need our immediate attention.

GSA appreciates the partnership with senior management and acknowledges their efforts for staff well-being during the liquidity crisis. However, concerns persist about ongoing change processes globally, driven by resource constraints, affecting staff retention. The prevalent use of short-term and temporary contracts creates significant job insecurity, anxiety, and instability among staff, impacting their morale and productivity.

UNICEF's exceptional staff globally demonstrate commitment, resilience, and an unwavering passion for delivering results for children. The GSA is collaborating with the division of human resources to provide an adequate staff recognition program that will foster a positive work environment and further boost staff morale and motivation.

Distinguished members of the executive board, staff remains immensely thankful for your support. We deeply value your continued prioritizing of staff in deliberations, decisions, and actions, knowing that your advocacy ensures our collective success.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of UNICEF staff worldwide.