

**UNICEF Executive Board Second Regular Session of 2026
1–4 September 2026**

**Opening remarks by the President of the Executive Board
H.E. Mr. Rein Tammsaar, Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Estonia to the United Nations
*1 September 2026***

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the UNICEF Executive Board's second regular session, our final formal gathering for this year.

On the agenda for this week are 14 items, including 5 items for negotiation by the Board; and 17 new programme documents being presented for no-objection approval. Of the 17, we will consider 16 new country programme documents and 1 multi-country programme document – for a combined total of 28 countries.

We will review the Global and Regional Programme document, 2026–2029, an integral part of the Strategic Plan and a framework that supports the achievement of child rights and helps to drive global, regional and cross-border solutions for children.

Also on the table for this session are new items on governance and oversight, which were added to the agenda following requests made by the Board in decisions adopted at the annual session in June.

We will break from the plenary meeting on Thursday morning to hold a special focus session on Innovation in Education, which you may know is an area of keen personal interest for me, as well as for my country.

Innovation is also a key feature of the work of UNICEF to improve the lives of millions of children, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized. I look forward to the discussions in which we will hear from our panellists, and the experience of Estonia will be shared and connected with the strategic direction and efforts made by UNICEF to improve the accessibility and quality of education for children across the globe.

Distinguished delegates, we are convening this session at a critical moment.

We are coming to the end of the first year of implementation of the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029, during a period of unprecedented challenges for children, with growing humanitarian needs, public

health emergencies, climate and environmental risks and shrinking resources affecting the organization's efforts to uphold the rights of every child.

In the coming months, we will join hands with the UNICEF secretariat to commemorate the organization's eightieth anniversary of service to children. Since 1946, UNICEF has helped to drive some of the greatest advances in human progress. But for the first time in a generation, these hard-won gains for children can no longer be taken for granted, unfortunately.

Let us unite with UNICEF as it calls upon all of us to reaffirm its mandate and to protect the gains made for children over multiple decades, while making an urgent case for renewed action and investment in their future.

Distinguished delegates, I look forward to working with you all this week in a spirit of collaboration, as I have tried to do in the past. I would share a kind reminder that politics has no place in this boardroom, where our paramount concern should remain the well-being of children, particularly those who have been left behind.

I look forward to our important discussions over the coming days, and I sincerely thank you in advance for your constructive and active engagement. Please remember that here we are really focusing on how we can serve children around the world.
