Chair, Madam Executive Director

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

First of all, let me reiterate our deep appreciation for the strong commitment of Executive Director Fore and her remarkable dedication to UNICEF and the world’s children. Under your leadership, Madam Executive Director, relations between UNICEF and the EU have grown even further.

We also commend UNICEF staff and partners for their sound engagement to address the needs of children, particularly in these challenging times. We appreciate UNICEF’s response to the COVID-19 crisis, including its strong support to vaccination, education and continued advocacy for children’s rights. As we know, the pandemic has drastically increased children’s vulnerabilities and needs and we must strive collectively to protect the most vulnerable of them and give them a future.

We welcome the ambitious Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the corresponding four-year integrated budget of USD 27 billion. We are pleased to see that UNICEF has aligned the Strategic Plan and integrated budget planning periods, which should allow to improve coherence between strategic and financial planning. As we know, needs
are becoming more complex and higher while the funding available remains limited.

We welcome the comprehensive Gender Action Plan, which outlines how UNICEF intends to operationalize this crucial aspect of its mandate across its programmes and workplaces. As rightly stated in the Plan, gender equality is essential to realizing UNICEF’s mandate of upholding the rights of all children and should be fully integrated across the humanitarian-development nexus. We very much support UNICEF’s actions to achieve better and more gender-equal outcomes for all children and adolescents, with a particular focus on adolescent girls.

We also welcome the draft plan for global evaluations 2022-2025, which will allow to provide critical feedback in support of the Strategic Plan during its implementation in each of the five Goal Areas. We recognise the work accomplished by the Evaluation Office to implement the 2018-2021 global evaluation plan despite the challenges caused by the pandemic and we salute the continuous institutional effort to expand the tools and expertise available to country and regional offices to generate rigorous evaluative evidence.

In that regard, we also note the positive evolution of evaluation methods since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, towards a better understanding of the way countries respond to crises. We particularly support the real-time assessments of the UNICEF response to the pandemic developed by several country offices, and more generally we encourage UNICEF to continue its efforts to ensure better evaluation coverage of emergency responses. We also strongly support the
participation of UNICEF in UN system-wide and joint evaluations and encourage efforts to pool resources and foster collaborative approaches.

To conclude, I wish to reaffirm the European Union’s strong commitment to promote and protect the rights of the child. The EU is one of the main donors to UNICEF and we are looking forward to continuing our partnership with you. And I would also like to reiterate our high appreciation for the leadership of Executive Director Fore and wish her and her family all the best in this difficult moment.

Thank you.