Australian Statement
Second Regular Session 2021
UNICEF Executive Board

Agenda Item 8: Update on Humanitarian Action

Chair/Madame Chair

Australia would like to express its appreciation for UNICEF’s indispensable contribution to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF staff and local partners have put forth immense efforts to continue to deliver in existing and new humanitarian crises, while simultaneously scaling up an unprecedented global pandemic response and vaccine rollout. This is truly an impressive accomplishment.

In addition to the COVID-19 crisis, we continue to see an escalation of humanitarian need, in both conflict settings, as well as climate change related challenges, which continue to increase in number and scale. We welcome UNICEF’s continued engagement in the Indo-Pacific which continues to be one of the world’s most natural disaster-prone regions.

UNICEF placed a very welcome emphasis on humanitarian action in its Strategic Plan and articulated its intention to apply a humanitarian lens to all analysis and approaches. Looking ahead we would encourage UNICEF to provide regular updates on its implementation of recommendations from the recent Humanitarian Review. We would also like to learn more about how UNICEF intends to adapt its structure, processes and staffing to support increasing humanitarian needs, especially with regards to climate-change induced disasters, localisation and UNICEF’s commitment to implement the humanitarian development peace nexus.

Also important is the need for UNICEF to continuously prioritise gender and disability inclusive approaches in its humanitarian responses. This is critical to address the specific and intersectional needs of vulnerable and marginalized individuals, particularly women and girls, and ensure that they are consulted and can meaningfully participate in decisions that
affect them. We welcome the renewed focus on commitments including ending gender-based violence and stronger engagements with women-led humanitarian organisations.

We would also encourage UNICEF to work to consolidate the gains it has made on the localization agenda during the COVID response. The number of local partners has increased, and community-driven approaches have become ever more important. Strengthening the capacities of local partners, particularly women and disability led organisations is crucial in helping safeguard against financial and SEAH related risks. Having local partner inclusion assists in being accountable to affected populations. We encourage UNICEF to continue expanding its efforts in this regard.

Lastly, we see UNICEF as having a crucial part to play in addressing urgent nutrition needs against the current backdrop of widespread famine and see this as one of its main humanitarian priorities.

We stand ready to continue supporting UNICEF in these endeavours.