

Agenda Item 2

Opening statement

Mister President, Madam Executive Director

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

First of all, let me congratulate you on your appointment, Madam Executive Director, and welcome the new Bureau members. We look forward to working together and continuing the good partnership which has developed over the years between UNICEF and the EU.

We reiterate our appreciation for the engagement of UNICEF and its implementing partners to address in a comprehensive manner the needs of children and their mothers and ensure a better future for children. Unfortunately, the pandemic has dramatically increased their vulnerabilities, and we have to strengthen further collective efforts to make up for opportunities lost during the pandemic, strengthen resilience, and not jeopardise progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

We appreciate UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 crisis, including its strong role in vaccination, and support the establishment of the Global COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Inter-Agency Coordination Structure as well as the ASG position as long as the pandemic requires. It will be important to ensure regular information to donors as a key element to identify gaps and provide an adequate response.

We commend UNICEF's robust response to counteract the negative effects of COVID-19 on children and their access to education. We fully support the efforts to forge a common vision for education leading to the Transforming Education Summit scheduled in the second half of 2022. We would be grateful to hear about your plans to move towards a new social contract for education and work on a transformational commitment at the summit.

We welcome UNICEF's commitment to fight malnutrition with nutrition programmes in 130 countries and your global leadership and ambitious goals to ensure healthy diets for all.

We also welcome the update on UNICEF's humanitarian action. We welcome that the implementation of the recommendations of the Humanitarian Review is under way. The Humanitarian Review is a very important tool to help improve the quality and predictability of UNICEF humanitarian action. We support in particular your efforts to strengthen preparedness and anticipatory action, to link better your humanitarian and development work as well as to enhance capacity-building among staff and attract the best candidates to humanitarian positions. We also encourage your active participation in the increasing inter-agency efforts to enhance Accountability to Affected Populations as well as the localisation of aid. We strongly support your commitment to the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national systems and services, delivering for children in large-scale population movements and strong priorities on education, WASH and protection as well as gender-sensitive programming and a dedicated Core Commitment. We welcome the roll out of a global capacity-building initiative on children on the move.

Reiterating the EU's zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, we welcome the progress update on UNICEF's work to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment across its programmes and workplaces. This work should address exploitation, abuse and harassment perpetrated both off and online. We note that 92 per cent of the recommendations made in the independent panel review have been completed or integrated into UNICEF's ongoing activities. We welcome the inclusion of specific indicators in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 to measure gender imbalances in staffing and management training on gender equality, as we know that gender inequality in the workplace contributes to sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct. We also appreciate UNICEF's intention to continue, in cooperation with other UN agencies, to engage Governments, implementing partners and civil society in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. It is crucial that all allegations of sexual misconduct are swiftly investigated and sanctioned and that victims receive the necessary legal assistance. In this context, we also underline the importance of effective prevention measures.

The fight against violence against women and girls is at the heart of the European Union's concerns and we are grateful to count UNICEF among our main partners in this fight. In particular, we welcome the efforts you have made and the results achieved despite the pandemic for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilations and Child Marriage for which the EU wishes to continue its support to the Joint Programmes through the Spotlight Africa Regional Programme. We share your approach for a gender transformative change. As you know, 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.

The EU appreciated your contribution to the development of our Strategy on the Rights of the Child, and your follow-up to ensure the implementation of our commitments.

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 partners to UNICEF and we are looking forward to continuing our cooperation with you.

Thank you.