

Joint statement on Item 6(a) – Update on UNICEF Humanitarian Action

Thank you, Mr. President.

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Greece, Japan, Norway, Iceland, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Canada, France, Greece, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, and my own country, the United Kingdom. We would like to start by thanking UNICEF, and in particular the Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes and his team, for their work on this Humanitarian Review.

We underline that this Review is a crucial piece of work toward fulfilling UNICEF's mission to support children in humanitarian crises, especially considering some worrying findings of the Review itself regarding skills; qualities and expertise of personnel; ways in funding action; low risk appetite; localisation and Accountability to Affected Populations. We also welcome this report and call on UNICEF to regularly update the Executive Board on its progress throughout the year.

The 4-year timeframe for implementing the Review's recommendations allows for them to be properly embedded within the organisation. In particular, we are pleased to see that the timeline for this Review aligns with both UNICEF's Strategic Plan as well as with the new Executive Director's term. Driving forward the implementation of its recommendations should be one of her priorities.

We commend UNICEF for conducting this Review transparently and for tackling key challenges head-on, including the need for changing the institutional mind set around humanitarian action. Substantial progress already made on several recommendations relating to institutional capacity-building and improved procedures demonstrates UNICEF's genuine commitment to this agenda.

In moving forward with the implementation of the recommendations, we encourage UNICEF to take steps in four areas:

First, to systematically implement Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) throughout humanitarian programmes.

Second, to provide more information on expected efficiency gains and savings. If the reforms do produce the expected savings, these should be re-directed into programme implementation for better value for money.

Third, to be clearer about the reforms in the area of 'data collection and analysis' and to demonstrate how UNICEF is developing better targeted assistance.

And fourth, to provide greater clarity on its role in strengthening humanitarian system reform.

Furthermore, we would welcome a progress report and a status matrix on the 70 recommendations and the results achieved; the update states that only 50% are currently underway. We request information on how UNICEF is prioritising among 70 recommendations and which ones risk not being implemented. We would also welcome greater detail on the estimated cost for implementing the 70 recommendations. If the additional funding needs are unmet, we wish to learn how that will impact implementation.

We would also like to re-affirm our support to UNICEF's focus on women and girls and, specifically, on girls' education in emergencies and protracted crises; more than half of the estimated total of 132 million girls who are out of school live in fragile and crisis-affected

states. We welcome the renewed focus on commitments including ending gender-based violence and stronger engagements with women-led humanitarian organisations.

We commend UNICEF's work to strengthen collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and encourage UNICEF to continue to explore opportunities for further work in this area, in full adherence with the humanitarian principles.

We also acknowledge UNICEF's strong leadership and important work on the response to COVID-19. We would encourage UNICEF to consolidate the gains it has made on the localisation agenda during the COVID-19 response, including to continue to strengthen the capacity of local partners, particularly women-led and disability organisations.

In conclusion, we commend UNICEF's strong organisational will to forge ahead on these important challenges and related recommendations outlined in this Humanitarian Review, and we use this opportunity to underline our unwavering support to UNICEF and its mission to bring lifesaving help to children.

Thank you.