

FINAL — CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
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Executive Board Statement
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Thank you, Mr. President, and all of our Board members for your commitment to, and vision for, children and young people.

Thank you also for your ongoing work to make the Board's work more efficient and effective. Your guidance and oversight functions are very important to us. As you support us, we stand ready to support you.

And together, we can be enormously proud of the results we have achieved — the children and young people whose lives we have improved and saved — the partners, resources, supporters and dedicated staff members we continue to gather around our cause — and the values we have worked to uphold.

As you know, 2019 is an important year for this cause — the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In my meetings and discussions with many of you, you have told me about the plans in your countries to mark this milestone.

But as we look back on what has been accomplished, we must also look to what we are accomplishing today. And what we will accomplish together in the years ahead.

At this morning's session, we will hear about some of these results included in my Annual Report.

This report marks yet another milestone — the first Executive Director's Annual Report since the new Strategic Plan was implemented. A Plan that Board members have helped shape.

As we will discuss, the Report paints an inspiring picture of progress and potential for children and young people.

From a continually declining rate of under-five mortalities, and in the number of stunted children, and in child marriages in 2018.

To the 4.1 million children who received lifesaving treatment for severe acute malnutrition.

To the children and families we have supported in humanitarian emergencies in 90 countries last year. Including the 43 million people whom we reached in 2018 with safe water...the 20 million children vaccinated against measles...and the seven million who gained access to education in emergencies.

The list of accomplishments is impressive — all thanks to the support and generosity of your governments. All thanks to your vision and commitment for children and young people.

Of course, the report also reminds us of the work still to be done — in both humanitarian and development contexts.

The 15,000 children who die every day, mostly from treatable diseases and other preventable causes.

The alarming rise in overweight children, but also girls suffering from anaemia.

The stubborn challenges of open defecation and child marriage.

And the conflicts that continue to deny children the protection, health and futures they deserve.

On a personal note, some of the most sobering moments of the last two years came during my visits to countries in conflict like Mali, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Along with our partners, our staff members are doing all they can to support the young lives affected by these conflicts and other emergencies.

With your support, we can — and are — immunizing children against disease. Delivering safe water and nutrition. Providing access to education, cash transfers, protection and counselling to help children cope. And helping communities rebuild hospitals, schools, and water and sanitation systems.

On our humanitarian action, we will discuss today an update and an evaluation of our work in these complex, fast-moving settings.

This includes our work along the humanitarian-development continuum to sustain development gains, build resilience and prevent future crises as we respond

to emergencies. Our emergency programming now includes short, medium and long-term plans. We see this in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Syria and the countries of the Horn of Africa, for example.

Another example is our work in Afghanistan, to move beyond treatment for severe acute malnutrition towards prevention.

And yet another is our use of U-Report in Indonesia following the Sulawesi earthquake to provide information and services to children and young people. Improving and saving lives as we strengthen services and communication for the future. Worldwide, the number of U-reporters is nearly seven million — a great example of how we can use technology to bridge these distances and bridge to the younger generation.

On all of these issues, I want to hear your thoughts on what we have accomplished so far, and what more we could be doing.

Are we on the right track? Are there accelerators we could incorporate into our work? Perhaps some programming that you have seen that could be scaled-up in your countries, or with our partners? Or innovative financing solutions to

urgently fill financing gaps in emergencies — as we are doing through the Famine Action Mechanism, for example?

Because these Board sessions are an important opportunity not only for Board members to listen to UNICEF — but for us to listen to you, and for you to actively shape our work.

So I look forward to your ideas and suggestions on these issues.

I also look forward to discussing UNICEF's progress in accelerating the important reform efforts across the UN Development System.

As we discussed in February, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals means being as efficient as possible across every UN programme.

And it means keeping our focus where it belongs: not on processes, but on results — sustainable results — at the country level.

On the reform efforts, UNICEF's staff members are engaged across a wide range of areas to achieve these results and drive change across the system.

One example is the new Management and Accountability Framework, which is now being rolled-out at the country level. This is a vital ingredient as we support national governments' work to reach the SDGs.

To strengthen ties among our agencies — especially at the country level — we are actively reviewing our procedures and guidelines in developing our country strategies in alignment with our sister agencies and the SDG targets.

The UN Sustainable Development Co-operation Framework promises to be a useful tool in shaping our Country Programme Documents, and we will fully support the development of new Co-operation Frameworks tailored to specific country contexts.

To drive more integrated and strategic UN-wide support at country level, it is also critical that the new full-time, independent Resident Co-ordinators act as facilitators on behalf of the system.

I can assure you that UNICEF's staff — particularly our country representatives — are committed to working with RCs to help deepen partnerships and expand innovation and advocacy in each and every country.

We need to remember — the RCs and their offices are not watchdogs. Rather, they are valuable assets upon which agencies like ours can draw to advocate for the United Nations and build more support for our work.

However, progress in reform implementation across all UN agencies has been — admittedly — uneven across countries. And as yet, we have not seen any savings from the RC system.

Ultimately for UNICEF, the measure of the reform's success will be in the collective results we achieve for children across all SDGs, in every country. UN Country Teams and the Resident Co-ordinators are both important parts of this. We look forward to working with host governments — and our donor partners — to continue making improvements and achieving results.

At the same time, we recognize the need for predictable and sustainable funding for this revitalized RC system. UNICEF doubled our 2018 global cost share for 2019.

We are now operationalizing the one per cent levy in accordance with system-wide guidance and donor preferences for collection methods. We estimate that, in future years, the total collected from the levy by UNICEF could reach up to \$20 million annually, for transfer to the Secretariat.

And our UNDS reform efforts present an important opportunity to explore potential for additional savings through the use of common premises and back-office functions. We will work with other agencies to develop business cases that identify areas of savings that can be channelled towards our programming.

Step by step, these reform efforts are starting to take hold at the country level.

In Rwanda, our UN teams have taken “deliver as one” to heart. The Operations Management Team — chaired by UNICEF — is bringing together

agencies to harmonize business practices, reduce transaction costs and share expertise.

In Cambodia, the UN Country Team has launched an SDG “leadership lab” to share ideas on how we can jointly accelerate progress in the areas of social protection, youth, data and nutrition.

And in Morocco and Egypt, country teams are coming together to discuss how to bring our respective programme and planning and reporting mechanisms closer together.

These are just a few examples of many.

But none of this important work is possible without the continued support of our donors — especially through stable, flexible, multi-year and unrestricted regular resources.

For children and young people in every context — humanitarian and development alike — this stable and flexible funding can often mean the difference

between illness and health, education and ignorance, protection and danger, and even life and death.

And for those who deliver these important programmes — UNICEF’s staff members across 190 countries — this funding is equally critical. Thank you again for helping to provide this support, so our staff members can continue serving children and young people so well.

Our staff members also deserve a safe, respectful workplace.

As we have discussed, the last year has been a year of examining, strengthening and re-committing to our culture at UNICEF, and bringing to life our commitment to our core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability.

Our staff members deserve no less. They trust us to create and maintain a respectful and inclusive work environment, where sexual harassment and abuse, discrimination, and abuse of authority have no place.

Over the last year, we have taken a number of steps to build and strengthen this trust.

This includes better and more simplified reporting mechanisms and enhanced investigations for alleged wrongdoing, including sexual harassment and abuse of authority. We want our staff members to feel safe in coming forward, knowing that their reports will be handled in a manner that respects both due process and human rights.

And it includes an independent report I commissioned last year on workplace issues within our organization, including sexual harassment. The co-chairs submitted their full report to me last week, and I am currently reviewing both their assessment of our work culture and their recommendations.

We are now in the process of translating the report, and will send to all staff members on June 24. We will discuss its findings at a special Town Hall meeting at the end of June, with all of our senior managers throughout the summer, and — of course — with all of you at our September session.

Gender discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority are issues that directly affect our programmes. Our reputation. Our workplace. And most importantly, our people.

Every decision and every action we take through our management culture, processes and policies must live up to the trust that our staff members — and our donors — have placed in us.

Through this work, I have made it my mission to re-establish this trust, and ensure that staff concerns are heard...that they are taken seriously...and that we act upon them.

Another important aspect of this work is our ongoing journey towards full gender equality and inclusion at UNICEF, following last year's EDGE certification (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality).

As part of this, we conducted UNICEF's first-ever gender pay gap analysis and found that we have an overall gender pay gap of just under 10 per cent in favour of women, especially in support-level positions.

When we look only at our international professional staff, we have a small gap — about four per cent — in favour of men.

We are now working towards bringing these gaps to zero.

We have also made progress on more flexible work arrangements, including a new policy to support this approach.

In the first quarter of this year, twice as many staff have used flexible working arrangements, compared to the first quarter of 2018 — mostly through telecommuting, and mostly women. We are committed to continuing this vital work to build a flexible workplace of the future for our staff — one that meets both their needs and the needs of our organization.

I know I can count on the support of our Executive Board as we make the changes necessary to continue improving the culture of our organization, and giving our staff members the respectful working environment they deserve.

Throughout this journey, we will continue to rely on your ideas and vision — and your continued good stewardship of this Board — as we continue moving forward with our Strategic Plan commitments, and with the ambitious priorities I have outlined at previous sessions. From Generation Unlimited to innovation, from community-based health care to interweaving our humanitarian and development

work, and to sparking new public-private partnerships to achieve even more results for children and young people, in every context.

As we pursue these priorities, let us continue working to strengthen this organization. For our staff. For children.

Thank you. I look forward to a productive session today.
