

## **Agenda Item 2**

### **Cross-regional statement in response to ED Fore's Opening Statement at UNICEF's Executive Board - First Regular Session 2021**

**Delivered by H.E. Martin Bille Hermann. 5 min.**

Madame President (Ambassador Plepyté),

Thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to congratulate you and the new members of the Bureau on your election. We look forward to working with you this coming year, which in many ways will be a defining one.

Madame Executive Director,

Thank you for your opening remarks. I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, the EU as a Donor, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and my own country Denmark.

As we embark on a new year, which marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UNICEF and the adoption of a new Strategic Plan, it is an opportunity to reflect on past and present challenges, lessons learned and the road ahead.

Please allow me to make 4 points.

#### **[Covid-19 and COVAX]**

First, we commend UNICEF for its early and agile response to Covid-19. We would in particular like to thank UNICEF staff who have continued to assist children during the pandemic under difficult conditions.

We also welcome the leading role that UNICEF plays in COVAX. More than ever, the world needs UNICEF's strong expertise to provide safe and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Delivery of vaccines to low and middle-income countries is not just a moral imperative; it is enlightened self-interest. We remain committed to equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and COVAX, the COVAX AMC and UNICEF are crucial in this regard. Many of us have already contributed to the COVAX-facility, and we encourage other member states to do the same.

**[BBBG]**

Secondly, in our efforts to build back after Covid-19 we must not only build back better and more equal, but also greener. The crisis caused by the pandemic makes a focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement ever more urgent. Our planet and societies are more vulnerable than we thought.

To this end, we welcome UNICEF's progress in reducing its carbon emissions. At the same time, we wish to stress that UNICEF's contribution to the climate agenda must go beyond reducing its carbon footprint. We encourage UNICEF to ensure that climate awareness and action becomes an integrated part of UNICEF's programming, including in education initiatives.

**[Strategic Plan]**

Madame Executive Director,

As you stated, the challenges facing children have *changed*, and how we support them must *change too*.

We must learn from this global crisis, adjust our priorities, increase our ambition and avoid reverting to "business as usual".

This leads me to my third point.

As we embark on the drafting of a new Strategic Plan we urge management to integrate lessons learned as well as the recommendations of the evaluation of the current Strategic Plan, the Gender Action Plan and the Humanitarian and Midterm reviews.

We also encourage UNICEF to use its dual mandate effectively to build bridges between humanitarian and development initiatives, while contributing to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and reduce the risk of programmatic silos.

We also support the development of a longer-term, outcome-focused strategy for children.

### **[Gender Equality and human rights]**

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries, including pre-existing gender inequalities and heightened protection risks.

More girls than boys are out of school. The crisis has led to an increase in gender-based violence and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. We welcome your acknowledgement of the importance of SRHR in UNICEF's work.

UNICEF's response must address these structural inequalities. This requires strategic efforts based on gender disaggregated data as well as allocating sufficient resources for these important areas.

We encourage UNICEF to apply a multi-sectoral, human rights-based and gender-transformative approach, in order to ensure that no child – regardless of gender - is left behind.

### **[Financing and UNDS-reform]**

Finally, strong international solidarity and support for the multilateral system is paramount in responding to the current crisis.

It is our shared responsibility to ensure that UNICEF is resourced sustainably. Timely, flexible and predictable contributions are key, but increased funding is not a goal in itself.

It is more important than ever to focus on efficiency gains, and ensure that a maximum of aid reaches beneficiaries most in need and achieves lasting impact. It is crucial to build synergies and enhance coordination and cooperation among the multilateral organizations to ensure a comprehensive response with maximum impact while avoiding duplications.

We recall our strong support to the UNDS reform and the Funding Compact commitments to enhance efficiency and transparency.

### **[Closing]**

Madame Executive Director,

In closing, we look forward to the year ahead and continuing our partnership with UNICEF to jointly make a difference in the lives of children all over the world.