



البعثة الدائمة للجمهورية التونسية
لدى منظمة الأمم المتحدة
بنيويورك

EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNICEF
FIRST REGULAR SESSION 2021

**Statement of Tunisia
Under Item 2
General Debate**

(New York, 09 February 2021)

##

#

#

Madam President,

Madam Executive Director,

Honorable Members of the Executive Board,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like at the outset to express Tunisia's appreciation to the Members of the Bureau for their efforts during this first regular session, under the leadership of Her Excellency the Permanent Representative of Lithuania, and to assure all of you of Tunisia's full support throughout your mandate.

I wish to also thank the Executive Director for her opening statement and to acknowledge particularly the efforts of UNICEF despite a particularly challenging global context.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Unfortunately, we are holding this first regular session in a different world than last year's as we are still facing COVID-19. Reports show that the pandemic is likely to push an estimated up to 66 million children into situations of extreme poverty, exacerbate the global learning crisis and digital exclusion, increase malnutrition among children relying on school meals and jeopardize children's mental health.

The unintended consequences are especially felt on vulnerable categories, such as migrant children, children with disabilities, children in rural areas, in conflicts and in humanitarian situations.

Another consequence of the pandemic is the staggering emergence of violence, either against children or domestic violence, which children were forced to witness while in lockdown.

If not properly addressed, the medium- and long-term impacts will exacerbate pre-existent structural inequalities, reverse progress made and have devastating lasting consequences for societies.

It is within this context that Tunisia remained committed to strengthen its legal frameworks and institutions aimed at promoting and protecting children rights, safety and wellbeing before, during and beyond the pandemic.

Tunisia has made significant progress in this regard, from the establishment of a legal code dedicated to the protection of children, to enshrining the principles of

dignity, best interest of the Child and the rights of children to health and education in our constitution. The adoption of the National Multisectoral Strategy for Early Childhood Development 2021-2025 represents more recently an important commitment of the Government for the creation of an environment that meets the needs of parents and children.

During the pandemic, Tunisia has taken immediate measures including the establishment of a 24/7 hotline since March 2020 to receive and handle cases of domestic violence remotely. By April, a confinement center was put in place, in partnership with civil society, to serve as a COVID safe shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We recognize children and youth not only as subjects with vulnerabilities, but also as rights holders and agents of change. We therefore work in order to enable their meaningful participation especially in matters that affect them, in accordance with our national and international obligations and commitments. Therefore, Tunisia has put in place, a multidisciplinary approach based on cooperation with civil society, child organizations and children themselves, including for the preparation of Tunisia's national report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as for the preparation of the Country Program Document that will be considered by the Executive Board during this session.

We finally renew our readiness to partner with different relevant stakeholders in order to fully implement the CRC, to achieve Agenda 2030 and to ensure that no child is left behind.

Thank you.