

UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD
First Regular Session
9–12 February 2021
Agenda Item II

National Statement by Pakistan

Madam President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you for assuming your responsibilities as the new President of UNICEF Executive Board. We wish you and your Bureau a successful session and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

We would also like to thank Ms. Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director UNICEF for her insightful remarks earlier today.

Madam President,

The COVID-19 pandemic is unraveling decades of health, education and other advances for children across the globe. Schools are closed, children have missed on their immunization and more families are being pushed into poverty, with devastating effects on the health and well-being of children.

Even before the pandemic, conflict, poverty, malnutrition and climate change were already driving unprecedented growth in the number of children in need of humanitarian assistance.

Now COVID-19 is making this situation even worse.

Madam President,

In Pakistan, we adopted an approach of “smart lockdown” in order to avoid COVID-19 related hunger and livelihood disruption as these could have devastated more people than the disease itself.

Our approach to deal with the health emergency was compounded by a robust economic strategy.

While we did ease some of the restrictions, but schools and immunization for children were hard hit by the pandemic.

However, despite these challenges, the Government, with assistance from UNICEF, resumed polio outbreak and immunization response activities in July last month. Schools are also starting to re-open in a phased manner.

We particularly appreciate the good work done by UNICEF in Pakistan during this difficult period.

We hope that it will continue to facilitate the government efforts to safeguard the health and survival of the most vulnerable children by ensuring the continuity of critical services and increasing investments in education, health and child-sensitive social protection schemes.

As the largest single vaccine buyer in the world, UNICEF has a unique and longstanding expertise in procurement and logistics. Besides procurement of PPE, UNICEF and its Covax partners should help developing countries in acquiring adequate Covid-19 vaccine at the earliest.

Madam President,

There is no time to lose.

Without immediate funding and key lifesaving interventions to deliver essentials, strengthen health systems and maintain routine services for vulnerable children, an additional 6,000 children under five could die a day – **more than 4 children every minute** – due to the direct impact of COVID-19.

We hope that the international donors will step up and provide flexible and predictable funding to UNICEF for fighting the unprecedented impacts of Covid-19 pandemic, as highlighted in UNICEF's annual *Humanitarian Action for Children* funding appeal for the year 2021.

I thank you.
