

U.S. Statement on UNICEF Country Program Documents
UNICEF Executive Board First Regular Session 2021
Thursday, February 9, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 2 – Opening Statement

This is a critical time for meeting the needs and protecting the rights of children worldwide as we face humanitarian crises and the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The United States is firmly committed to supporting the work of UNICEF, and we recommit to partnering with you to tackle these challenges hand-in-hand with other member states and international organizations. Let me share with you some of the ways we intend to do so.

We appreciate UNICEF's continued commitment to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable populations, notably children impacted by crises, and ensure they receive protection and assistance. We welcome UNICEF continuing to center its humanitarian response efforts on accountability to affected populations, meaningful community engagement, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

We will continue our strong collaboration with UNICEF to respond quickly to humanitarian crises. In conflict-affected zones, we will continue to call for an end to violence, and for constructive dialogue, respect for human rights, and safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

The empowerment and protection of women and girls is central to U.S. foreign policy, and we will work tirelessly with UNICEF and other international partners to advance this priority.

We recognize the critical role that UNICEF plays in providing health services, including the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of COVAX.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, the United States immediately re-engaged with the World Health Organization and pledged to join COVAX. We will work in partnership to ensure the world can move swiftly to address the current crisis and support the multilateral and equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines, without undermining incentives for innovation.

As part of our renewed commitment to protect women's health needs and advance gender equality, President Biden is working to restore U.S. support for policies and programs that deliver sexual and reproductive health services and address gender-based violence. This includes revoking the Mexico City policy and resuming funding for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

As a member of the Executive Board, the United States takes seriously our responsibility to ensure that policies and programs uphold integrity of the United Nations by ensuring that they are consistent with the UN Charter and Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In that regard, it is critical we continue to work together in New York and at the country-level on the Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Country Program Documents. These key documents must clearly articulate the needs of the most vulnerable populations in the program country and the added-value UNICEF brings to UN Country Team efforts. We will work to ensure they are formulated and implemented transparently, advance the foundational values of the UN especially supporting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that they effectively meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations of program countries. We look forward to further engagement by UNICEF, the Executive Board, and member states as the next generation Frameworks are developed.

On financial support, the United States is the largest donor to the UN system and several of its entities, including UNICEF. We will take steps to fulfill our financial obligations and call on other Member States to pay their fair share to support the critical work of the UN.

We also commend UNICEF's leadership for supporting UN development system reform targets to increase cost-savings and efficiencies. We will continue to work with UNICEF to advance the reform agenda.

The Biden-Harris administration believes America is stronger when we work with our partners and friends through strengthened and revitalized multilateral institutions.

As we discuss all these critical issues over the next four days, the United States is committed to supporting UNICEF's efforts to create opportunities for children to achieve their potential.