

Joint Statement
First regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board
9.-12. February 2021
Item 8 Evaluation of Strategic Plan 2018 -2021, and management response.

I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States and my own country Norway.

Madam President, Executive Director

We commend UNICEF on the evaluation of the use of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 as a tool for strategic and operational guidance. We thank UNICEF for this unique undertaking that gives added value to the process of developing the new strategic plan.

The evaluation demonstrates that UNICEF has made notable improvements in many areas. We are pleased to see that there is progress in collecting data for better programming on leaving no child behind. However, there is room for improving the quality and relevance of disaggregated data in specific country contexts.

We appreciate UNICEF's commitment to engage with children and young people and ensure their perspectives are brought to bear in the framing of strategies and results, reminding UNICEF that this participation also is important throughout the programmatic life cycle and in monitoring and evaluation.

We also acknowledge notable advances in UNICEF's programming towards gender equality, while also noting that gender mainstreaming remains a challenge. We urge UNICEF to further strengthen its data collection and analysis to ensure that results are informed by sex disaggregated data.

We appreciate UNICEF's thorough approach, openness to learning, and the acceptance of all seven recommendations. The Management Response is a very good platform for further improvements in organization-wide strategic planning. We hope that it will be used actively to reinforce country planning and operations, and not merely as an instrument for aligning the reporting.

We would like to draw the attention to four specific issues:

- We welcome a stronger focus on outcome-level results, aiming at making real impact on children's well-fare and well-being. However, we do not fully grasp the implications of UNICEF's commitment to reducing the number of outcomes, combined with more flexible programming decisions, and how this will play out in the design of the new plan. For accountability purposes, it should be possible to monitor the link between UNICEF's specific role, and unique contribution to country-level results and global performance.

- We welcome broader and contextualized risk assessments to inform humanitarian-development nexus programming. We also believe there may be a need for more profound change strategies and capacity strengthening in planning and operation to adapt these processes to the reality on the ground, while continuous efforts should be made to ensure that humanitarian principles remain integral to UNICEF's work. The nexus should also include conflict-sensitive planning and peacebuilding as an integrated part of UNICEF's dual humanitarian-development mandate, as was highlighted during the Humanitarian Summit.
- We appreciate a renewed commitment to foster multisectoral approaches to break down internal silos and facilitate coordinated and integrated approaches with other UN entities in line with the principles of UNDS reform, all based on UNICEF's comparative advantages. Multisectoral approaches is an evolving concept. We look forward to seeing how this plays out in practice. Making full use of the repositioning at the country level, has a large potential in accelerating progress to reach the child-focused SDG-targets by 2030.
- We are pleased that UNICEF is planning to align the forthcoming Strategic Plan with the Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan, focusing on structural barriers, transformative actions, and gender equality benchmarks. Those actions that address social norms and intersectionality should be at the core of the Strategic Plan. A human rights-based approach as well as a specific focus on Child Rights is also instrumental.

I thank you