

First Regular Session of the 2021 UNICEF Executive Board

Statement by Ambassador Hyunjoo OH, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN

10:00-13:00, Tuesday, 9 February 2021

Madame President,

I would like to first extend my warm appreciation to Madame Fore and the UNICEF staff for their achievements in 2020 for children in the most vulnerable situations around the world. As Vice President of the Asia-Pacific Group this year, I will remain fully supportive of UNICEF's work and committed to further strengthening the Board's work in close collaboration with other Bureau members.

After an unprecedented year filled with incredibly pressing challenges for all of humanity, we entered 2021 with a strong hope for a return to normal life, including through COVID-19 vaccination and economic resurgence. Embedded in this positive picture, however, is our shape of the recovery that is likely to be uneven, uncertain, and unequal; and this poses an even greater threat to our next generation.

In this light, in my capacity as the representative of the Korean delegation, I would like to make the following three points.

First, Korea welcomes and supports UNICEF's efforts to ensure equitable access to and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines through its leading role in the COVAX Facility. We are assured that UNICEF can lead the success of this important effort, building on its experience and expertise in delivering other vaccines to children in every corner of the world. We look forward to hearing UNICEF's lessons learned from these massive-scale roll-out experiences at the coming Executive Board sessions.

For our part, Korea will continue to advocate safeguarding the global supply chain against disruptions and facilitating unhindered cross-border movement of essential people

and goods. At the regional level, we will further strengthen our cooperation with the Northeast Asian countries to build our longer-term joint capacity to effectively respond to health security crises such as COVID-19 under the Initiative for Infectious Disease Control and Public Health for the region.

Second, we are pleased to hear UNICEF's concrete examples and early achievements on securing learning opportunities, which we highlighted at the last two Board sessions. According to the recent World Bank study, early evidence has already shown that learning losses lead to increases in inequality. It is disheartening that such losses can additionally strain the most vulnerable children, particularly in fragile settings.

In this connection, we encourage UNICEF's continued efforts to leverage partnerships and innovation as an accelerator in delivering education, skills, training, and mentorship, with a view towards shaping a more resilient and inclusive education system.

Lastly, on innovative financing, we welcome UNICEF's bold approach to resource mobilization, including its recent partnership with the World Bank to make private funding more sustainable and predictable. With that said, we are keen to hear more on the potential risks of these new initiatives and their management.

Thank you. /END/