

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE ON THE OCCASION OF THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD FIRST REGULAR SESSION ON AGENDA ITEM 6: ORAL REPORT ON UNICEF FOLLOW-UP TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS OF THE FORTY-FIFTH AND FORTY-SIXTH JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD MEETINGS. 12 FEBRUARY, 2021

President of the UNICEF Executive Board – H.E. Ms. Audra Plepytė

Executive Director – Ms. Henrietta Fore

Fellow Executive Board Members

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by thanking UNICEF for the oral update on its follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings.

Madam President

Zimbabwe, as one of the countries affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and in a high-prevalence sub-region, I wish to make the following points:

First – Zimbabwe appreciates the efforts being made by UNICEF in line with its given mandate in the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS programme coordination, to respond to this emerging threat to the ongoing HIV/AIDS programmes. Given that progress had stalled in this area, even before the COVID-19, both Member States and UNICEF, therefore, need to double or even treble their efforts to avoid back tracking, and also to offset the impact of the COVID-19 on HIV/AIDS programmes.

Second – Zimbabwe regrets that none of the super-fast-track targets for children and adolescents that were set for 2018 and 2020 have been met, despite the fact that targets were agreed upon long before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 only exacerbated an already dire situation by disrupting the delivery of services, thereby increasing the risks of HIV transmission.

Third – Zimbabwe is concerned that diminishing political will and donor fatigue were identified as some of the reasons attributable to the stalling in progress on the fight against HIV/AIDS. Given the high prevalence in our region, we cannot afford any backsliding in the progress made this far in efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS cases. In fact, Zimbabwe is working with UNICEF to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and accelerating the implementation of interventions that would eventually lead to the country being validated for elimination of such transmission. In that regard, the Government of Zimbabwe wishes to assure UNICEF of its commitment and political will to achieve this goal. This would go a long way in reducing new infections and moving towards creating an HIV/AIDS free generation.

Madam President

In conclusion, we are interested to know the concrete steps UNICEF would be taking to ensure that progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS is not further eroded during the COVID-19 pandemic and that countries emerge from the pandemic stronger and wiser, drawing valuable lessons from the pandemic and taking this opportunity to build back better.

I thank you.