

UNICEF Executive Board

First Regular Session 2021

Agenda Item 5 "UNICEF programme cooperation"

Remarks by the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN

February 11, 2021

Madam President,

I thank the distinguished speakers for their briefings.

Armenia values its close cooperation with the UNICEF and we appreciate the efforts of the UNICEF in alleviating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in Armenia, including through projects aimed at supporting continuity of education through partnership with private sector and civil society organizations.

National ownership is key to success of any programmatic cooperation. The programmatic activities between the UNICEF and the host country authorities should be in line with the national needs and priorities. Putting the rights of children at the core of the programmatic cooperation is also crucial for their efficiency. At the same time, attempts to utilize the CPDs for promoting biased political narratives are detrimental for result-oriented cooperation and assistance to those in need and such manipulations should be adequately addressed by the UNICEF.

Madam President,

We are strongly concerned regarding the attempts by Azerbaijan to instrumentalize the Country Programme Document for advancing its distorted conflict narratives. We deplore the practice of imposing by Azerbaijan of politicized formulations regarding the underlying causes, essence and principles of resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which run counter to the statements of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship, the internationally mandated format dealing with the resolution of the conflict, as well as the statements of the United Nations Secretary-General.

This major departure from the draft CPD, as it was initially published on November 17 2020, is particularly worrying in light of the recent pre-planned large-scale aggression of Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh, which has inflicted devastating damage upon the civilian population and critical infrastructure, claiming numerous lives, leading to war crimes, atrocities, displacement of tens of thousands people, including children and humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh). The aggression has resulted in deprivation of over 24 thousand children of their basic right to education, massive and targeted attacks of educational institutions and destruction of 18 schools and 6 kindergartens in Artsakh in gross violation of international humanitarian law.

Azerbaijan deliberately targeted the maternity ward of Stepanakert's Maternal and Child Health Center.

The CPD for Azerbaijan doesn't address the dire human rights situation in the country and issues of state-sponsored radicalization of children and adolescents. Educational curricula in kindergartens and schools of Azerbaijan deliberately expose children to anti-Armenian propaganda, fueling ethnic hatred and inciting violence and intolerance, as reflected in the Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on Azerbaijan, adopted in 2016.

Attempts by Azerbaijan to instrumentalize the programmatic cooperation with the United Nations agencies must be effectively addressed. The ability of the UNICEF to demonstrate resilience to such manipulations is crucial for its credibility in ensuring the stance of the United Nations to put children and their human rights at the centre of its response.

I would like to request that the statement of the Delegation of Armenia is duly reflected in the records of the session.

Thank you.