

Agenda Item 10

UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2020 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response

Mister President,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

First of all, we welcome the continued public disclosure by OIAI of internal audit reports as transparency is key.

We welcome the Management response, which recognizes opportunities to enhance UNICEF organizational governance, risk management and control.

We welcome that in 2019, UNICEF started undertaking an organizational improvement initiative with a view to enhance accountability and complementarities and build on opportunities created by the UN reform. We appreciate that the outcomes of this review will inform the next Strategic Plan. We note in particular the recommendation to enhance engagement and collaboration with partners, including NGOs. In this context, we would appreciate regular updates about the strengthening of the partnership strategy as well as the rollout of eTools. We would also welcome information on whether there is an exchange of related experiences between the different UN agencies.

We support OIAI's recommendation to develop an organization-wide field-monitoring strategy and enhance the coverage and quality of programme monitoring visits in country offices. We look forward to the inclusion of the programme monitoring system's review in the next Strategic Plan.

We also welcome the establishment of the Donor Reporting Portal, which will lead to increased efficiency in creating donor reports, both within UNICEF and for partners.

We fully support the recommendation to strengthen evaluations by allocating adequate financial resources and capacities, as well as the Management's establishment of an Evaluation Pooled Fund. In this context, we also encourage more inter-agency evaluations, not only to share resources but to look at outcomes in a partnership approach.

We welcome the announced improvements on the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers and UNICEF efforts, in the context of the pandemic, to increase digitalisation in order to perform remote monitoring and reduce the potential for errors or fraud.

We note the positive results of the OIAI advisory review of the UNICEF emergency procedures put in place for the COVID-19 response and Management's commitment to improve them further. We also welcome the human resources measures implemented in order to respond to the crisis in a flexible and timely way.

We appreciate UNICEF's leadership's engagement to foster a culture of integrity and accountability. Robust fraud awareness training for its staff and implementing partners is a welcome step. We note efforts in recovering financial losses to the greatest extent possible and would appreciate if the Board were kept informed about alternative measures to address this issue, including signalling to other UN entities via the UN Partner Portal and further strengthening internal control measures.

In closing let me reiterate that the EU remains fully committed to the fight against any form of fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. We continue to apply a zero tolerance policy and expect the same of our partners.

Thank you.