

Annual Session 2021 – UNICEF Executive Board
Item 6 – Annual Report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender
Action Plan, 2018-2021

Thank you Mister President, Madame Executive Director, Distinguished UNICEF Colleagues, Esteemed Colleagues,

I am very pleased to be delivering this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and my own country Canada.

We wish to thank UNICEF for the annual report on the implementation of its Gender Action Plan, 2018-2021. Overall, we are pleased with the progress achieved, especially given the significant challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We commend UNICEF for its UNSWAP performance, meeting 88% of all benchmarks. We also welcome UNICEF's efforts to accelerate actions in the last year of the plan to achieve strong gender equality outcomes.

We emphasize the need to ensure that women and girls, in all their diversity, are at the centre of COVID-19 response plans and strategies, and that gender norms and power relations must be addressed for a sustainable recovery. We appreciate UNICEF's efforts to do this as it looks towards gender-transformative approaches.

We encourage UNICEF to emphasize child-led approaches across all sectors to foster their participation, empowerment and leadership. We further encourage UNICEF to continue to invest in partnerships with other United Nations agencies, national partners, global organizations, civil society and the private sector to fulfil its mandate on gender equality. We are pleased to learn that in 2020, UNICEF expanded its partnerships with grassroots women's rights organizations, given the critical role that they continue to play, particularly in the pandemic response.

We welcome that UNICEF continues to strengthen the evidence base for gender-informed policy and programming. We continue to expect our partners to collect and use sex-disaggregated data, and to integrate gender equality and outcomes within their responses as they prioritize efforts to support those in the most vulnerable situations and safeguard progress towards the SDGs.

We appreciate the significant rise in the percentage of UNICEF's resources dedicated to gender equality-targeted initiatives, and we remain interested in following the progress of UNICEF's efforts to strengthen and invest more in gender mainstreaming. We also remain interested in following UNICEF's progress on strengthening its approach to addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including the consideration of the rights and empowerment of LGBTI children and youth.

We are pleased to see UNICEF's continued support for advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights through its Gender Action Plan, including ensuring targeted work on comprehensive sexuality education, menstrual health and hygiene, HIV, maternal health and infant survival, child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting. This work is more important now than ever.

In closing, we look forward to the presentation of UNICEF's new gender policy and gender action plan to the Executive Board in September. We recognize that these documents represent your approach and commitment to achieving the SDGs and, as members and observers of the Board, we acknowledge our role to support you in advancing this important work. We stand ready to do so.

