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**Joint Statement on (Item 8) Global evaluation of UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene programming in protracted crises, 2014- 2019, and management response**

**ANNUAL SESSION 2020  
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**June 1, 2021**

I am very pleased to be delivering this shortened version of our statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Costa Rica, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, France, the European Union as a donor, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and my own country Finland.

Madam President, Executive Director, thank you for your leadership in these challenging times. We welcome the encouraging results from the presentation.

While Sustainable Development Goal 6 Access to Safe Clean Water Sanitation and Hygiene is an essential enabler of the 2030 Agenda, overall water issues suffer from **lack of visibility in international processes**. Effective, coordinated and consistent international cooperation is needed to strengthen the complementarity of actions and programs dedicated to the water and sanitation sector.

The global leadership role of UNICEF in this sector is widely recognized. In this regard we welcome the launch this year of the UNICEF “Water Security for All” initiative. A mutually agreed definition on the concept of water security would serve to accelerate policy and practice at multiple levels.

As the WASH provider of “last resort” UNICEF has an essential role to play in the sector particularly in conflict-affected countries. Particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring the safety of users of WASH services, and improving services for persons living with disabilities and persons in vulnerable situations.

**Accelerating implementation of SDG6 in protracted crisis** requires a shift from a linear approach and adapting programmes in line with the procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming. Lack of adequate user participation in design and implementation leads to poorly designed and, consequently, poorly used WASH services **Multi stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approaches**, are critical to promote integrated water resource management process, which does not only involve the different levels of government, but also includes civil society, academia, local communities, women and girls, youth and private sector. Therefore, coordination of water and sanitation activities should focus on the long-term perspective and not only deal with short term operational issues. As highlighted in the evaluation, UNICEF country offices should demonstrate that they are adjusting to the up-to-date context, conflict and risk analysis that crosses silos.

Inadequate water and sanitation services has negative impacts on gender equality and places a disproportionate burden on women and girls. In this context we note the need to accelerate progress on WASH in schools and improving menstrual hygiene management, which has a direct and negative impact on educational outcomes for girls. We note with concern the lack of

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recommendations related to ensuring WASH interventions are gender-responsive and the need for this issue to be adequately taken into account.

**Addressing water-related disasters** requires capable prevention, effective preparedness and effective use of available resources. We also need to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development interventions to ensure the sustainability of water and sanitation interventions. At both country and global levels, UNICEF could do more to enact a systems approach to reliability and ensure water and sanitation services put in place in emergencies are linked to existing infrastructure. More also needs to be done to accelerate core efforts and activities within the humanitarian and development interventions that aim to prioritize your strategic result areas such as: access to WASH in Schools, WASH in Health Care Facilities (*both of which has been tremendously relevant work during the C-19 Pandemic*); Menstrual Health and Hygiene; as well as Climate Resilient services, and Urban WASH. We emphasize once again also the great need to continue to focus your efforts on overall Inclusion and Gender equality.

**Information and quality data about water** quantity, quality, distribution, access, risks, and use is essential for effective decision-making. Yet major gaps in water data and decision-making systems exist. We note with concern the finding from the evaluation that UNICEF did not routinely collect and report data on what changes – intended or unintended, positive or negative – resulted from WASH interventions. We encourage UNICEF to prioritize these efforts at country level, so it should be done in close dialogue with each country.

We have two questions we would like to pose

- 1) How will the findings of this evaluation feed into Goal Area 4 in the upcoming strategic plan?
- 2) One of the gaps identified in the evaluation is that there is no operational guidance to the procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming. How will UNICEF address this?

In closing, we express our appreciation to UNICEF for the work to enhance access to water, sanitation and hygiene, including in very challenging circumstances, and would like to especially express gratitude to the local staff and partners of UNICEF for their ongoing efforts in this regard

Thank you.