

UNICEF Executive Board - 2022 First Regular Session

10 February 2022

Statement by the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Greece, Dr. Domna Michailidou

Topic: “Need to scale up investments in social protection as a core strategy to reducing multidimensional poverty”

Your Excellencies,

Executive Director Russell,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to participate in the 2022 First Regular Session of UNICEF Executive Board.

As we gather today, it is appropriate to remind ourselves of a key provision in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 says that *“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”*

The topic we are addressing today is at the very core of protecting and promoting human rights, everywhere in the world and more importantly the human rights of children, children who will become the next generation of adults that build societies and drive development.

Children experience poverty differently from adults; they have specific and differentiated needs. While an adult may fall into poverty temporarily, **a child who falls into poverty may be poor for a lifetime – rarely does a child get a second chance for a good education or a healthy start in life.**

Childhood is a time of unique opportunity and vulnerability and experiencing poverty in its various dimensions is particularly damaging to a child’s development, which results in deprivations that impact the next stages of life.

Child poverty also exists, but is more hidden, in non-poor households. Large families or those with un- or under-employed breadwinners are more likely to include poor children.

In Greece, we aim to promote a life-cycle approach to vulnerability, one that can forecast the socio-economic impact on different population groups and prioritize risk-coping mechanisms, while developing social protection policies to prevent these risks from having a long-term impact in children’s lives.

Social protection plays a crucial role in addressing economic and social vulnerability across the life course, including when unexpected shocks - such as a financial or health crisis – occur, by supporting a progressive distribution within groups, as well as across generations. **By highlighting the non-financial needs of children, our aim is to connect cash transfer and benefits programmes to information, knowledge, and relevant services.**

The government of Greece, with the support of UNICEF and within the framework of the Child Guarantee Initiative, recently concluded a detailed analysis on unmet needs and access barriers for children in Greece, reiterating its commitment to inclusive social protection.

Our efforts aim at rebalancing fiscal stimuli through innovative state financing, together with attracting private sector resources to enable the national roll-out of impactful social protection initiatives and reduce existing gaps in the children’s safety net.

Excellencies,

I am looking forward to working with all of you and wish you all the best in the important work ahead of us.

Thank you.