

## UNICEF Executive Board - 2022 First Regular Session

10 February 2022

Statement by Her Excellency, Mrs. Maria da Conceição da Silva Évora  
Minister of Women, Family and Social Solidarity

*Urgency to prioritize child poverty reduction as a pillar of inclusive and sustainable recovery, given the impact of the “triple c”: climate, conflict and COVID-19*

- Distinguished delegates, I am honoured to speak before you all today about my country’s efforts to reduce child poverty and its far-reaching consequences. I take the opportunity, on behalf of my government, to express our sincere appreciation for the long-standing and fruitful partnership with UNICEF, to the benefit of the children of Guinea Bissau.
- In Guinea-Bissau, child poverty affects more than half of all children. Most common dimensions of child deprivation are sanitation, health, education, and housing. I am proud to say though, that we made strong progress: child mortality significantly came down from 89 to 51 per 1,000 live births, access to sanitation has improved, and today nearly half of all children have their birth registered – a figure that doubled in recent years.
- However, today, several shocks have enhanced the vulnerability of children in our country. As you know, Guinea Bissau is a small-island nation and our children are among the most at risk of the impact of climate change, notably floods. In addition, families and communities still feel the impact of years of instability that followed the 2012 military coup, and which severely affected the country’s economy and provision of services.
- And then COVID came. The pandemic exposed the fragility of social service provision and our country’s economy. Children born into vulnerable families and in marginalized communities have been pushed into deeper levels of poverty, especially those living in female-headed households. The pandemic is setting back development gains made over the past years and will constrain progress toward the SDGs.
- Distinguished delegates, in this context, our National Development Plan places special focus on the reduction of child poverty which my Government considers an unacceptable reality. In partnership with UNICEF, we are strengthening the national social protection system to step up support to vulnerable households and make it more responsive to shocks. We will build on positive experiences such as the UNICEF-supported Cash Transfer Programme that revealed how small and regular payments make a substantive difference in the lives of families and children. We acknowledge the need to continue scale-up investment in social protection programmes, to build resilient communities.
- Therefore, the Government of Guinea-Bissau re-affirms its commitment to work closely with UNICEF and we express our support to the 2022-2026 Country Programme Document, with the intention to invest heavily in child-centred poverty reduction programming through social protection and other risk-informed interventions.

Thank you for your attention.