



**Statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Olof Skoog on
behalf of the EU during the UNICEF Executive Board
Annual Session on**

Agenda Items 2 and 3:

**Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and
the Executive Director of UNICEF and Annual Report 2021**

**United Nations
New York
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Mister President, Madam Executive Director,

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

Thank you, Madam Executive Director, for your words and your optimism that even under the challenging circumstances, UNICEF will continue to deliver and strive for maximum results and efficiency.

We would like indeed to express our appreciation for the work of UNICEF staff and implementing partners in a period marked by extraordinary humanitarian needs deriving from the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as new or escalating conflicts and protracted crises. We commend UNICEF's efforts to help maintain basic services for children wherever possible while responding to new needs, including for children on the move. We appreciate in particular UNICEF's efforts to protect children fleeing from Ukraine.

Looking at the Annual Report for 2021, it is encouraging to see that despite the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF came close to achieving 100 per cent for 19 out of its 25 result areas, even if only 66 percent of the Strategic Plan output targets were met due to the cumulative effects of the pandemic. This shows again the importance of investing in systems strengthening and preparedness in order to help countries regain the progress put on hold.

However, despite all efforts, there is a risk that the world will not manage to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, notably in terms of child mortality, immunization or access to safe water and sanitation. These challenges confirm the need for UNICEF to strengthen even further

coherence and collaboration across humanitarian and development work, in line with its dual mandate. We would therefore be interested to hear what remedial actions to accelerate results and impact for children UNICEF intends to put in place in the next few years in the sectors which are lagging behind. We would also appreciate an update on the work following the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit and the preparation for this year's Transforming Education Summit.

We welcome that UNICEF finalised its Gender Action Plan 2018–2021 on an overall positive trajectory in its progress towards gender equality, at both programmatic and institutional levels. However, there remain several areas of concern such as gender-based violence and girls' secondary education, which have even worsened during the pandemic. Therefore, we encourage UNICEF to continue addressing the disproportionate impact on girls and women in order to correct as much as possible reversals in gender equality gains. We welcome UNICEF's efforts to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online. In this context, I would like to point out that the EU has strengthened its action in this area, notably with a newly proposed Regulation which sets out rules for detection, reporting and removing child sexual abuse material online and paves way for the creation of an EU Centre. The Centre will support the work of law enforcement and companies, act as a hub of expertise for all aspects of prevention and victim support, and cooperate with similar centres around the globe.

As one of the main donors to UNICEF, we are pleased to see that 2021 was a record-breaking year for UNICEF revenue. We welcome that private sector revenue has increased by 29 per cent and encourage UNICEF to continue its efforts to enlarge its donor base.

We welcome the Executive Director's words on UNICEF's commitment to collaboration and coordination with UN Partners, and to greater transparency and accountability.

We appreciate UNICEF's demonstrated partnership approach with other organisations, including an increasing proportion of UNICEF country offices delivering programmes jointly with other United Nations entities.

This is very positive and we encourage you to further build these partnerships within and outside the UN system, learning from existing collaborations that have proven to be effective, notably through the Spotlight Initiative, including those with UNFPA on the elimination of FGM and child marriage. In the current context of rising needs, it is key to keep up efforts for efficiency gains, through more common services and joint-up approaches with other UN agencies in a "One UN" approach, or through aid modalities that entail lower management costs. In this context, we welcome UNICEF's continued support to the implementation of the UN Development System Reform and we take note of the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 and the repositioning process.

We are pleased to see that the Office for Internal Audit and Investigations concluded that the UNICEF framework of governance, risk management and controls was generally adequate and effective. We encourage UNICEF to continue working on enhancing its policies, procedures and systems. In view of the increase in the number of allegations of fraud and misconduct in 2021 as compared to 2020, we strongly support Management's commitment to strengthen efforts to

understand the underlying causes, address any systemic weaknesses and engage in a swift recovery of related financial losses.

Thank you.