

Agenda Items 2 and 3
Statement by the Kingdom of Belgium

Madam Executive Director,

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Let me first **thank you Ms Executive Director and Mr. President** for your compelling opening remarks. Let me also congratulate you, Ms Executive Director, for your leadership and tireless efforts, since you took office, to protect the rights and well-being of children globally in one of the most challenging international context we have known in decades.

The **combined effects of conflicts, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and today the war on Ukraine** with the acute risk of global food insecurity it is causing has had a dramatic effect on the situation of children globally, particularly the most marginalised ones.

Your report highlights it, Ms Executive Director, 2021 saw **unprecedented humanitarian needs** as escalating conflicts and crisis destroyed livelihoods and infrastructures, leading to grave violations of children's rights and forcing over 30 million children into displacement. The pandemic has pushed 100 million children into multidimensional poverty, and in 2021 more than half of the world's children were living without necessities such as healthcare, adequate nutrition, clean water, sanitation, safe housing or education. Half of the world's children (i.e. 1

billion children) also live in countries at extremely high risk from the impacts of climate change, facing exposure to multiple hazards.

In this context, **renewed and robust engagement** by all stakeholders is needed more than ever.

In this global effort, **core contributions play an essential role** to allow flexible, rapid and targeted response to alleviate the suffering of children.

My country therefore **calls on all donors** to :

1. Maintain a **special focus on the least developed countries**, especially in Africa. The current strategic plan allocates the majority of resources to the least developed countries, which Belgium welcomes. However, we could anticipate a decrease in their number coupled with an increase in middle-income countries, which would mean a decrease in contributions to the least developed countries in absolute terms. Given the current challenges, how can we ensure that resources go where they are most needed? Does UNICEF intend to readjust these assessments and allocations if necessary to address the needs of the most vulnerable?
2. Ensure **greater commitment to address fragility and inequality**, including by helping countries strengthen their social protection systems. While UNICEF is already playing an important role in this regard, which we welcome, it can only be truly effective if it is done in good cooperation with the countries concerned and relevant actors inside and outside the UN system. Could you give us more

information on this subject, for example on ongoing cooperation with the resident coordinator system, the ILO, the World Bank or UNDP?

3. **Bridge the gap** that sometimes remains between the current multi-dimensional core strategies and certain practices of the country teams that still favour targeted earmarked projects. This approach does not encourage quality contributions, which are inherently less visible, or integrated approaches adapted to the current global challenges.

In general, as a strong supporter of UNICEF, we will have a strong focus on:

- The importance of embedding the **visibility of core donors** in a global organisational culture at all levels. We will pay particular attention to the means used and the follow-up;
- **Accountability**, which remains our number one point of attention, particularly in the current context.

I thank you.