

Agenda Item 7
Evaluation of the UNICEF role as cluster lead/ co-lead
agency and Management response

Chair, Madam Executive Director

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

We welcome this evaluation and the positive Management response. We appreciate that the implementation of some recommendations is already underway. We support the humanitarian cluster system and believe that the recommendations of this evaluation are an important tool to help improve the leadership, coordination and accountability of UNICEF in the humanitarian response. Several issues were already pointed out in the last evaluation. We therefore look forward to receiving regular updates on how UNICEF intends to implement the recommendations. This should also guide UNICEF's contribution in updating IASC efforts on clusters and feed the reflection on their adaptation to the changing humanitarian context. We encourage UNICEF to play an active role in this respect and would appreciate regular updates on related inter-agency initiatives.

We commend UNICEF's progress in its coordination role as cluster lead agency at country level. We note, however, that the cluster lead agency role is still not sufficiently prioritised within UNICEF, particularly at senior management level. Therefore, we strongly encourage UNICEF to implement Recommendation 1 and work towards institutionalising a culture of collective working. It is important to make the cluster lead agency role a core imperative of the UNICEF mandate, in line with the

new Strategic Plan. It is also important for UNICEF to invest in key cluster lead functions, such as cluster coordination and information management positions, and ensure that these key positions are covered by the UNICEF core budget. We welcome Management's positive response in this respect.

We note that resource mobilisation efforts by UNICEF for the collective response are in general appreciated but often give rise to concerns that UNICEF would use its cluster role to push its own agenda. We appreciate Management's commitment to ensure that by 2023 cluster roles in UNICEF country and regional offices will be fully dedicated to effectively fulfil cluster lead responsibilities and avoid perceived conflicts of interest.

We note with concern the finding that country-based clusters seem to lack strategic thinking and vision and do not receive clear direction from UNICEF on how to implement several Grand Bargain commitments. We trust Management will take adequate action to address this.

Furthermore, the evaluation points to a lack of clarity within UNICEF as to whether the primary focus of the global clusters should be on setting direction and strategic priorities or on day-to-day coordination and technical support. We strongly encourage UNICEF to provide cluster coordinators with the necessary guidance. In this context, we reiterate our encouragement for clusters to become more effective fora for joint analysis and priority-setting for the response and to increase inter-cluster coordination, starting with the joint needs assessment and analysis platform offered by the Joint Inter-sectoral Analysis Framework.

We strongly support Recommendation 2 and encourage UNICEF to align its internal systems with its cluster responsibilities, looking in particular at staffing issues and better rewarding the work of cluster coordinators, recognizing them as key leadership positions. We welcome that, in implementation of the recommendations of the Humanitarian Review, a revision of the job descriptions of the regional directors and country representatives is under way to establish stronger accountability for the cluster lead agency role.

Thank you.