

## UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD ANNUAL SESSION – 15 JUNE 2022

### Joint UK statement - Item 4a) Annual Report on UNICEF Humanitarian Action

Madam President, Excellencies,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkiye, the United States, and my own country, the United Kingdom.

I would like to begin by thanking all UNICEF staff for their important humanitarian contribution, as detailed in this year's Annual Report.

Let us be clear: the global humanitarian outlook has become even bleaker this year. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is a critical driver of increased humanitarian need and global food insecurity.

In light of the publication of UNICEF's Annual Report on Humanitarian Action, I would like to make 5 points:

First, we commend UNICEF for important achievements in 2021 and this year. We note that UNICEF has played a central role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the procurement and delivery of vaccines. We also welcome its partnerships at all levels, including the UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children, which provided coordinated support for women and children in the Ukraine crisis.

Second, we welcome the UNICEF Humanitarian Review recommendations and urge a continued focus on implementation of these recommendations with a clear plan and timelines. At a time when global needs outstrip available resources, we encourage UNICEF to strengthen its approach regarding identifying and targeting populations in greatest need, as well as to allocating aid to the hard to reach and most vulnerable. We equally look forward to the development of UNICEF's localisation strategy.

Third, we appreciate progress on Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment but note that paragraph 34 of the Annual Report states '*under-reporting is still a significant challenge*' – this must continue to be addressed. In this regard, it is paramount that UNICEF's approach towards PSEAH is victim-/survivor-centred, prioritising their choices, wishes, rights, safety, and confidentiality. We would also encourage UNICEF to more clearly articulate its work on preventing and responding to child marriage in humanitarian settings.

Fourth, on Accountability for Affected Populations, we note with concern in paragraph 91 of the Annual Report that improving accountability to affected populations has been a key challenge throughout 2018-2021. We request a clear explanation of what barriers have been preventing progress on this, both internally and across the Humanitarian Response Plan where UNICEF is the lead, and how UNICEF will address these challenges.

Fifth, the pandemic response has reinforced the value of scaled up anticipatory approaches, including through flexible, coordinated and predictable financing for anticipatory action, early warning and action systems, forecasting, and emergency preparedness. We welcome the creation of a new dedicated HQ Team focused on expanding preparedness, anticipatory action, and risk assessment, and request further information, including what anticipatory needs analysis looks like in practice. We would appreciate a briefing from the Team in this regard.

Finally, we urge UNICEF to continue to focus on inclusivity. We welcome the specific reference to inclusive programming for children with disabilities. However, we would like to better understand how UNICEF integrated children with disabilities into overall activities and achievements. Specifically, we request details on how many local organisations were Disabled People's Organisations. Similarly, we are pleased with the reporting on funding for and increased partnerships with women-led organisations, which creates a baseline. Women and girls are powerful agents of change. We request additional details on how Women's Rehabilitation Organisations were engaged in GBV prevention and response. We encourage UNICEF to highlight inclusion as a key priority for 2023.

Thank you.