

**United States Statement for
Board Approval of UNICEF's Country Program Document for Syria
June 16, 2022**

(five-minute time limit)

Thank you, Chair.

I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of Belgium, Germany, and my own country, the United States of America. We also align ourselves with the statement just delivered by the United Kingdom. We join the Board in supporting approval of UNICEF's Country Program Document (CPD) for Syria.

At the outset, we thank UN leadership and UNICEF colleagues for their efforts to address some of our concerns regarding the Strategic Framework for Syria and the CPD.

We reiterate that we do not support the UN's 2022-2024 Strategic Framework for Syria. It is fundamentally flawed and has the potential to risk the effectiveness of country level UN programs designed to help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. The document is divorced from reality. It ignores the fact that conflict, specifically the Assad regime's brutal war against its own people, is the main cause of Syrians' suffering today. This Framework puts the UN's credibility at risk.

There is a well-documented history of the Assad regime manipulating aid for corrupt purposes, and also diverting aid towards favored communities. In response to this, member states worked closely with the UN to establish its own "Parameters and Principles of Humanitarian Assistance in Syria." These "Parameters and Principles" remain paramount but, regrettably, are only obliquely referenced in the Framework. We are among the largest donors to the humanitarian response in Syria, and it is essential that our taxpayer dollars be safeguarded.

This Framework will not change our policy regarding assistance in Syria, including our opposition to regime-led reconstruction in the absence of a political solution, in line with UNSC Resolution 2254. We will not fund UN programs that engage in reconstruction; we will hold the UN to its "Parameters and Principles;" and we will redouble our efforts to promote accountability for those who commit atrocities in Syria.

On UN Framework's more broadly:

First, while UN Frameworks are based on the principles of national ownership and leadership, this should not be at the expense of UN principles and values. These Frameworks should serve as a gold standard and credible basis for the agencies' country programs.

Second, while UNICEF achieved significant improvements to the CPDs in response to Member State feedback, similar improvements were not achieved in the Framework. The resulting lack

of alignment between the Framework and CPDs has the potential to undermine UN development system reform and the relationship between RCs and the UN Country Team.

Third, while RCs are responsible and accountable for the development of cooperation frameworks, frameworks are ultimately the product and responsibility of the entire UN Country Team, and agencies are responsible and accountable for their CPDs.

We urge the UN leadership and Funds and Programs:

- To ensure RCs work closely with the UN Country Team to develop Frameworks that allow for alignment with and smooth approval of CPDs.
- To consider whether a one-size-fits-all approach to Frameworks is in the best interest of UN reform and alignment with CPDs, and to find creative solutions in instances where Frameworks have the potential to risk donor funding and undermine UN reform, Member State agreements, and UN principles and values.

To close, we stand ready to engage in further dialogue to ensure that the UN development system lives up to its founding principles and addresses the needs of the most vulnerable at a time when we cannot afford any distractions.

Thank you.