

As of 12 June 2023 – 10:00

UNICEF Executive Board

Item 7: Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment

13 June 2023

Thank you **madam/mister chair**,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following (cross regional) group of Member States: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, the EU as a donor, and my own country, Czechia.

--- cross board para ---

Madam/mister chair, let me begin by extending our appreciation for the continued efforts of **UNICEF** for its ongoing work on ensuring the prevention of, protection from and response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH). While there remains a lot of work to be done, much has been achieved on updating policies and procedures, training, expanding PSEAH focal points and networks, capacity building, and inter-agency cooperation. We recognize and appreciate these efforts in the spirit of the zero tolerance for inaction approach.

It is excellent to see efforts to standardise and share implementing partner capacity assessments. Increased engagement with implementing partners is critical, given that they do most of the delivery on the ground, maintain direct contact with communities and grassroots organizations, and are well placed to identify and mitigate SEAH risks.

We reiterate that protection from SEA and SH cannot and should not be tackled by each UN entity on their own. Collective learning and gender-responsive action to address common challenges and risks are necessary to achieve a consistent result across agencies. The increasing use of Clear Check is a welcome step in this direction. Furthermore, we encourage the use of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme to further reduce the risk of hiring perpetrators, and welcome the Secretary-General's call to identify how the two schemes can reinforce each other. A coordinated and coherent human rights-based response can best safeguard the principles of a victim/survivor centered approach: safety, confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination.

This recurring, constructive joint dialogue with the Executive Board is necessary. In this time of interrelated and multiple crises, we know the vulnerability of women and girls in all their diversity and the real SEAH risks they face in their daily lives. We expect, similarly, constructive dialogue and cooperation between all UN entities. We are interested to hear how **UNICEF** is sharing information and lessons learned at all levels, including with other UN entities and implementing partners.

Madam/mister chair, we thank **UNICEF** for the comprehensive documentation provided for today's session and recognize its efforts for incorporating the updates requested by the Board. We appreciate that awareness among staff is growing and more country offices are equipped to prevent and respond to SEA and SH.

We highlight the importance of results-based reporting with a focus on impact and culture change. As PSEAH efforts improve, reporting and discussions in New York must follow suit. Whilst reporting on outputs delivered is necessary and welcome, it is also key to evaluate at a more strategic level whether efforts have accomplished the intended impact for leadership, staff, partners, and local communities. We see positive steps in this direction from **UNICEF**, and we encourage **UNICEF** to continue this good work.

Moreover, we would benefit from a reporting format that compiles metrics from multiple sources and shows the current year's progress compared to previous years' results with a supporting narrative on activities. We welcome **UNICEF's** views on this matter.

Madam/mister chair, Please allow us to highlight a few elements based on the documentation provided:

As of 12 June 2023 – 10:00

--- agency specific part ---

First, we commend UNICEF for its continued work with partners and personnel to improve reporting effectiveness, awareness and access. We welcome that in 2022 over 48 million people were estimated to have access to safe reporting channels, up from 44 million people in 2020. We encourage UNICEF to continue efforts to further improve communities' knowledge of their rights and how to report incidents.

Second, we appreciate UNICEF's efforts to build partner capacity across the sector. We note here the importance of the availability of quality funding to sustain that capacity and encourage UNICEF to build such costs into project budgets. Can UNICEF clarify the percentage of partners that have satisfactory safeguarding systems in place and the percentage that still requires further capacity building? To what extent and through which measures is further capacity building still needed? And how will UNICEF seek to share rather than to hand-over risks, especially with local non-governmental organization partners?

Finally, we welcome the transparent reporting regarding the limited number of offices that have identified safeguarding risks in 2022. We call upon UNICEF to continue to work with its offices, especially the country offices, to further guide them to identify and manage safeguarding risks.

Thank you.