

UK national statement: Executive Board Dialogue with UNICEF Executive Director,
delivered by UK ECOSOC Ambassador, Tom Woodroffe,
Tuesday 13 June 2023

Thank you for giving me the floor, Madam President.

From the outset, I would like to thank UNICEF for its life-saving work for vulnerable children, and in particular to thank its staff on the ground who are often working in challenging circumstances, including in Sudan, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Allow me to touch on 3 areas in response to Executive Director Russell's statement.

First. The UK launched its new International Women and Girls Strategy in March. Our strategy supports the ambitions we all share: to improve learning outcomes at scale for all children, to empower women and girls, and to end gender-based violence. The UK recognises UNICEF's efforts to champion gender equality in and through education, and we look forward to working with partners around the world to further tackle gender inequality through cross-sectoral and gender-based initiatives. How can the UK best support UNICEF to ensure that gender equality and foundational learning are a core focus of the Coalition for Learning?

Second. Access to education is a human right and a gateway to other rights. It's a pivotal tool for inclusive and sustainable economic recovery. For girls, education brings wide-ranging benefits. But efforts to undermine advances made in recent years put at risk hard-won progress on safe and quality education. Today, Afghanistan is the only country in the world to

ban women from secondary and higher education. This is a further violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of women in Afghanistan and has no religious or moral basis. Attacks like this on women's and girls' rights are an attack on our values and the fabric of democracy, and a key part of the broader global trend towards authoritarianism. What further steps can UNICEF take to work with other UN agencies to champion gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls?

And finally. The UK recognises UNICEF's continued progress on common premises and back-office consolidation. This progress has reduced bureaucracy and freed up resource to be spent on delivery. However, to meet the scale of the challenges we face, we must accelerate action on wider UN development system reforms. What further steps can UNICEF take to fully implement the Management and Accountability Framework?

Thank you.