

UNICEF Executive Board Annual Session 2023

Joint Segment Item 12 Ethics

Delivered by H.E. Ms. Elina Kalkku, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, on June 14th, 2023

Thank you Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Columbia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union as a donor, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and my own country, Finland.

Let me begin by extending our appreciation towards UNICEF for its **ongoing efforts to strengthen ethical and value-based culture** and independence, impartiality, and confidentiality of its Ethics Office. The Ethics function must be sustained to ensure the status of UNICEF as a trusted organization advocating UN system-wide values also in the future.

We thank the Joint Inspection Unit for the comprehensive review of ethics functions in the United Nations system. We also commend them for providing **a solid framework and developing a series of standards for analyzing and assessing the independence of an ethics function**. The recommendations by the JIU review of ethics functions as well as the review of whistle-blower policies and practices (JIU/REP/2018/49) must be followed closely. The management must support the critical roles and responsibilities of the ethics offices under the whistle-blower policy. We note the positive management responses on the reports by the Ethics offices. However, regrettably there are still UN staff members who need to reach out to member states or media in order to get their voices heard.

The total of the ethics services provided by the UNICEF Ethics Office has continued to grow substantially also in 2022. We appreciate the ability of the Ethics Office to provide these services efficiently. However, we continue to highlight the importance of paying attention to providing **sufficient financial and staff resources** to the Ethics Office in a sustainable and long-term manner. The new positions approved by the management are a good start, but for UNICEF to be a leader in this area more needs to be done. We believe an evidence-based assessment of the current capacity of the Office, and of projected future demand, would provide a good starting point for further improvement.

Due to the scarce resources in the Ethics Office and in keeping with efforts to reposition the UN Development System, we welcome and encourage UNICEF Ethics office's **collaboration with the Ethics Panel as well as the UN Ethics Office** in order to promote harmonization, effectiveness and efficiency of the ethics functions in the UN.

We support the recommendation of the management to the Ethics Office to continue its **collaboration with other multilateral organizations** to share best practices, scale up initiatives and promote coherent standards within the United Nations system. A harmonized approach is particularly vital to provide active support for operating in challenging contexts.

Training and education in ethics form a basis for a strong organizational culture. We welcome the systematic efforts of the UNICEF Ethics Office to strengthen its training function and take a more strategic, proactive and needs-specific approach to training. In addition to the trainings and the UNICEF Ethics Month, also the Ethics and Culture Champions Network has had a key role in building a more ethical organizational culture in the daily life of UNICEF offices worldwide.

Furthermore, **management must also lead by example** and we encourage UNICEF to develop more structural management capacity building and training.

As a follow-up to the Executive Board decision 2022/14, we would like to inquire on **the efforts taken to develop further whistle-blower protection**. What progress has been made and what are the lessons learnt. Furthermore, in your view, what are some **best practices** you have observed in other UN system organizations that you would consider adopting?

To conclude, we stress that it is in the joint interest of the Executive Board together with the Management of UNICEF and the Ethics office to continue strengthening the ethics function to increase awareness, trust and credibility of UNICEF, both internally and externally.

Thank you.