

Statement of H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board, 2023

5 September 2023, 11 am – 1 pm

Thank you, Madam President.

I thank the Executive Director Ms. Catherine Russell for her opening remarks highlighting the progress of the child-focused SDGs and outlining the priority actions. I also appreciate the leadership of UNICEF for successfully navigating through a difficult time of child emergency.

Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

We express our concern that at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, most of the SDGs are not anywhere close to the targets and the education related targets are severely off-track. Overlapping crises also caused the backsliding of routine immunization. All these have led to increased inequality exacerbated by weakened international solidarity.

Madam President,

Against this backdrop, allow me to raise a few specific points:

First, lack of adequate financing in education has made it the great divider, instead of the great enabler. Without undertaking additional measures, 84 million children will remain out of school, 300 million children will lack basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and achieving access to quality education by 2030 will remain a far cry, especially for the developing and poorer countries. Many studies

draw conclusion that education systems are no longer fit for the purpose. The international community must give proper attention to the crisis of education if we are to transform our world.

In this context, how UNICEF is working with the governments, international communities and other stakeholders to address today's crisis in education?

Second, despite efforts to expand immunization, the number of unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children are growing. The low- and middle-income countries, rural remote communities, urban slums, conflict and crises areas remain most under-served areas, facing challenges of availability, accessibility and affordability. Immunization is the key to achieving SDG3 and closely linked to 13 other SDGs. It is urgent to protect every child, everywhere against vaccine preventable diseases.

What are the specific approaches and initiatives of UNICEF to recover from a red alert for children's health and leave no one behind?

Finally, at the beginning of the High-Level Week of the 78th UN General Assembly, the SDG Summit is taking place with a high hope of accelerated progress towards the SDGs. It is seen as a vital opportunity to move from rhetoric to action and break through to a better world.

Could you please elaborate how the UNICEF is planning to take advantage of the summit of the world leaders to strengthen international solidarity and transformative actions in advancing the child-focused SDGs.

I thank you all.