

UNICEF Executive Board
2. Regular Session
General Debate
5. September 2023

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Thank you, Madam President,

I would like to thank Madam Executive Director for her statement, which unfortunately depicted a gloomy picture of the World children are living in.

This year, we are at the midpoint to the 2030 agenda, with only 7 years remaining to achieve the ambitious goals we determined in 2015. The forthcoming SDG summit will undoubtedly pose an important crossroads and it is only up to us to decide which path we will follow - to continue in a regress, and needless to say, we are tremendously off track to achieve the SDGs, or this opportunity is to be a wake-up call to take the helm and do our utmost to achieve our goal – also for all children who are innocent victims of our irresponsible action.

Respect for children's rights globally is in a sharp decline due to multiple crisis, such as protracted conflicts, poverty, inequalities, and climate change among others. Referring to the climate crisis, its consequences are clear and tragic as the Secretary General also stated. It has a direct and indirect effect on a wide range of children's rights, from access to education, housing, clean water to freedom from violence and abuse. In this regard, we strongly welcome a newly released report of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child according to which children have the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and governments must urgently act to ensure this, and we seize this opportunity to urge states to do so.

Another area of particular concern are conflicts having a detrimental effect on children's rights. In 2022, the United Nations verified an overall number of more than 27 thousand violations against children. Almost 19 thousand children were victims of at least one of the four grave violations affecting individual children: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; and abduction. At least 2,330 children were victims of multiple violations. No words can describe these appalling figures.

In this regard, we once again strongly condemn unjustified and unprovoked aggression of Russia against Ukraine in blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. We strongly deplore Russian ongoing deportation of children to the Russia and to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It should be also reminded that Russia was listed in the list of shame of this year's Secretary General annual report on children and armed conflict for carrying out grave violations against children.

Madam President,

This was indeed the last statement of Slovakia during the general debate from its position as the member of the Executive Board. Our 3 years tenure is coming to the end and we are about to pass the baton to our distinguished colleagues and friends from Estonia. I would like to express the appreciation of this delegation for this opportunity and to work with all colleague, including the amazing staff of UNICEF you should be very proud of Madam Executive Director and I am quite sure that you are. Though not being the member of the Executive Board as of the beginning of the next year, our steadfast support to UNICEF will remain and our mutual cooperation will continue – to advance protection and promotion of children's rights.

Thank you.