

UNICEF Executive Board
Second regular session of 2023
5–7 September 2023

Opening remarks by the President of the Executive Board
H. E. Ms. Marie-Louise Koch Wegter (Denmark)

(As delivered – 5 September 2023)

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Executive Director Russell, ladies and gentlemen, I again extend a warm welcome to you all.

2023 has already been a productive year for the Executive Board. Sixteen decisions and 16 new country/multi-country programme documents have been adopted during the two first sessions.

During the current session, we have 12 items on the agenda, which include five draft decisions. I am confident that we will this session maintain the efficiency and the high spirit of cooperation and compromise that characterized the two previous sessions; that we will continue to put UNICEF and, by extension, children at the centre of our focus; and that we will again keep politics out of the Board room.

This afternoon, we will consider the structured dialogue on financing the results of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and updated financial estimates for the Strategic Plan.

Tomorrow morning, we will focus on 12 new country programme documents, centred around the theme of data for children. We will also review the extensions of 12 ongoing programmes that will provide continuity of operations while ensuring alignment with national priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

We will also discuss tomorrow morning the revised evaluation policy, which will be considered for decision. Let me thank the UNICEF Evaluation Office for a good consultative process, and also the Member States that provided constructive feedback as part of the revision process of this document, which will be an important document for the oversight function of the Executive Board.

As requested by the Board in a decision taken at the annual session, later that morning we will also hear an oral update on humanitarian action, which will spotlight the UNICEF transformative approach to localization.

In the afternoon, we will hear an important update on oversight matters, specifically the implementation of the recommendations in the self-assessment of the independence of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, as well as consider our programme of work for 2024.

On Thursday – the last day of the session – we will begin with the interactive special focus session on Africa already mentioned by the secretariat, during which we will discuss opportunities and challenges for achieving children’s rights in Africa, especially as regards education, climate change, social protection and social justice. Let me extend a special note of appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Azali Assoumani, the President of the Union of the Comoros and Chairperson of the African Union, who will open the session with a pre-recorded message, and also a big thanks to the panellists who will afterward share their insights on this topic.

I am hopeful that our discussions and deliberations during the session will serve to provide us with good inputs that each of us can use to put children first, including as we prepare for the very important SDG Summit later this month.

Please join me now as we turn to the agenda for our meetings over the coming days. I look forward to our discussions on all of these matters and thank you in advance for your active participation and support in helping to make this session a success.
