



# REPUBLIC OF POLAND

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

750 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. (212) 744-2506

*Check against delivery*

## Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

### *Interactive special focus session*

*An Africa Fit for Children and Young People:*

*What investments are needed for Africa's human capital?*

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Krzysztof Szczerski  
Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations

on behalf of Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Slovakia, and Poland

New York, 7 September 2023

*Madam President,*

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Slovakia, and my own country Poland – current and incoming members of the UNICEF Executive Board representing the Eastern European Group.

We extend our gratitude to H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of Comoros, and the Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2023, for his insightful presentation before the Executive Board.

*Your Excellency,*

Your dedication to championing the rights of African children is commendable and resonates deeply with our collective efforts. We acknowledge the challenges that children in the Union of Comoros and throughout Africa face, and we are committed to fostering partnership to effectively address them and to achieve meaningful progress for the benefit of all children.

The relevance of today's discussion is indisputable, as the global youth population currently attains unprecedented proportions, with Africa – a continent with a median age of 19 – harboring the world's youngest population.

UNICEF predicts that Africa's child population will surpass all continents in the latter half of this century, exceeding 1 billion by 2055. Consequently, the support we provide to all children across Africa translates into the empowerment of over a billion forthcoming leaders and decision-makers.

Rest assured, *Mister President*, of the unwavering commitment of our five countries to collaborate with African partners, under the able leadership of the African Union, to ensure that children across the continent are given every opportunity to flourish. By drawing on our national experiences and resources, and our shared history of successful post-communist transformation, we are ready to share valuable insights, effective strategies, and best practices that can contribute to the well-being of children in Africa.

Within our own territories, we have undertaken significant efforts to enhance the lives of children through comprehensive healthcare, quality education, social support systems, and the creation of environments where they can thrive. We

believe that by working together, we can elevate these efforts and adapt these initiatives to the unique contexts of African countries.

Such collaborations are already underway through our national development cooperation programs, all of which prioritize the implementation of the full spectrum of the Sustainable Development Goals within Africa.

Our national efforts successfully complement our participation in the external action instruments aimed at assisting developing countries run by the European Union, of which all our countries are members.

The European Union and its Member States are the world's leading donor. As part of Team Europe our countries remain steadfast in their commitment to supporting Africa in the pursuit of improved child well-being. We recognize that no nation can progress without nurturing the next generation, promoting gender equality and equipping its youth with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively adapt to the rapidly changing world, and we are prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with African partners to make this vision a reality.

In the field of education, which constituted the leitmotif of your speech, *Mister President*, the European Union is firmly committed to supporting children's learning in Africa. Over the next six years, the EU will invest 3.5 billion euros in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across 46 Sub-Saharan African countries. This represents more than half of the EU's external education budget, totaling over 6 billion euros, and accounts for over 7.5% of EU's total external budget.

The funds allocated by the EU enhance access, inclusivity, and equity in education, facilitate digital and remote learning solutions, support teachers' training, and prioritize the safety of education, particularly in regions facing emergencies. Some of these EU-funded projects, including in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are implemented in collaboration with UNICEF.

In closing, let me express our gratitude for the opportunity to engage in this crucial dialogue.

We look forward to fostering partnership for the sake of the children who represent the future of our world. Together, we can create a brighter, more promising future for every child in Africa and beyond.

*Thank you.*