



Statement by

**His Excellency Mr. Max H. Rai, OBE
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations**

to the

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Executive Board
Second Regular Session**

**Country Programme Document
for Papua New Guinea**

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"Check against delivery"

Madam President, distinguished members of the UNICEF Executive Board, Excellencies, Madam UNICEF Executive Director, fellow Observer delegations and participants;

My delegation is pleased to join today's session in the context of the 2024 to 2028 UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) for Papua New Guinea.

At the outset, let me thank Madam Executive Director Russell for her strategic leadership and for the UNICEF representative's appreciable manner in introducing UNICEF's next 5-year CPD for Papua New Guinea.

Let me also recognize and pay special tribute to the Executive Board members, the UNICEF team at Headquarters and in the field level in the East Asia and Pacific region and particularly in Papua New Guinea, to the UNICEF Country Representative, Dr. Claudes Kamenga and his team, not only for the strategic leadership, constructive efforts and valued partnership for the new UNICEF CPD for Papua New Guinea, but also for the important work UNICEF does for all children worldwide, especially in today's world facing polycrisis.

Imagine for a moment, where would the world be on children's issues without UNICEF? Thank you indeed for placing the spotlight every day on the importance of the most precious gift we have, children.

Madam President,

Papua New Guinea values and appreciates UNICEF's key role, over the years and in concert with the UN system and our other bilateral and multilateral development partners, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, United States, China, United Kingdom, Singapore, European Union, World Bank, GAVI and Global Partnership for Education, in the areas of our children's education, protection, healthcare and nutrition, development and welfare, where we have witnessed positive results.

To highlight a few areas; in education, programmes such as the 'Child Friendly Schools', have seen growth in enrolment for early childhood learning and promoted conducive learning environments for children through improved teaching and learning.

In health, we have seen notable improvements in immunization coverage, nutrition, and an increase in awareness on maternal and newborn childcare.

In the area of child protection, UNICEF programmes have contributed positively to the implementation of the Lukautim Pikinini Act (Child Protection Act) and introduced positive parenting skills to address underlying causes of violence.

My delegation is therefore well pleased to lend our support and endorsement of the new comprehensive UNICEF CPD for Papua New Guinea and we urge the Board to adopt it by consensus.

Let me underline that our national commitment to our children's integral human development remains a key development priority for Papua New Guinea, as our future hinges on their wellbeing.

This is attested by relevant national law, policies and strategic frameworks Papua New Guinea has set in place and continue to evolve, including, for instance, the Lukautim Pikinini or Children's Protection Act 2009, the Family Protection Act 2013, and during the COVID-19 pandemic the National Health Plan 2021–2030, which uphold, protect and promote the rights of the child in my country.

Madam President, we are pleased that the CPD before us is the result of UNICEF's welcome broad consultations with the Government of Papua New Guinea and also with multistakeholders in my country, including youth, women, faith-based organizations and civil society, academia, the private sector and development partners.

Overall, the CPD, with primary focus on five programmatic areas related to "Survive and thrive; Learning and skills; Ending violence, abuse and exploitation of children and women; WASH, climate and environment; and Programme effectiveness; resonates well with Papua New Guinea.

We note that it draws on inter alia Papua New Guinea's international commitments and obligations related to children and women such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW, as well as the partnership with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

We also commend UNICEF for taking into account the key components of the twelve development strategic priority areas (SPAs) of my Government under our newly launched 2023–2027 Medium Term Development Plan IV, whose theme is “National Prosperity through Growing the Economy.”

For instance, on our Strategic Priority Area Four on Quality Education and Human Capital; Early Childhood Education and Quality Basic Primary Education are featured. Strategic Priority Area Three of our next 5-year development roadmap addresses the important issues related to Quality and Affordable Healthcare, which focuses on inter alia Primary Health Care, Specialized Healthcare, Health Infrastructure, HIV/AIDS and capacity building and training. Strategic Priority Area 11 speaks to Population, Youth and Women’s Empowerment, which includes family and social protection. On Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), this is covered under our Connect Papua New Guinea Infrastructure Strategic Priority Area 2. And on Climate Change and Environment Protection, this is addressed under our development Strategic Priority Area Ten.

Madam President, we have paid close attention to the narratives contained in the CPD. Some of which will require revision, going forward, such as Papua New Guinea’s estimated population and the percentage of children, in lieu of the pending national population census, which according to our own most recent national data and statistics projection, the population stands at over 11.7 million rather than 10.1 million, as noted in the CPD.

Also, when speaking of poverty in my country, it is important to differentiate between poverty per se and the poverty of access and opportunity to basic goods and services. For us, it is the latter moreso rather than the former.

Nevertheless, it is clear to us that whilst welcome progress has been made in various aspects of the many issues related to our children’s integral human development and protection, much more work remains.

We recognize that effective implementation of programmatic work on children’s issues remains an ongoing key challenge for us at the national level for various reasons, including capacity constraints and financing.

Madam President, going forward, Papua New Guinea is committed to do our part, as has been clearly pronounced and articulated in our Medium Term Development Plan IV. These include a more heightened sense of ownership and leadership and the importance of adequate budgeting and financing to scale up efforts for effective implementation.

We also recognize that the synergy, coherence and coordination between the new UNICEF CPD for Papua New Guinea and our own national development agenda priorities and frameworks is pertinent if the CPD is to successfully build on the foundations laid.

We recognize that strategic partnership, as identified in our new Medium-Term Development Plan Strategic Priority Area Twelve, is a pivot for the CDP's successful implementation.

We therefore call on our development partners, including UNICEF, to ensure that the new CPD implementation needs to be better aligned with our own national development agenda priorities for mutually beneficial outcomes, particularly for our children's welfare.

To conclude, let me reaffirm that Papua New Guinea stands ready and committed to further strengthen our constructive partnership with UNICEF and other development partners in the implementation of the new UNICEF CPD for my country.

I thank you for your attention.