

WEOG Statement

Second Regular Session 2023 of the UNICEF Executive Board

Special Focus Session on Africa's children

Madame President, Madame Executive Director, Excellencies,
I deliver this statement on behalf of WEOG.

First of all, a huge thank you to the panelists today, for your thought-provoking interventions. Especially the youth representatives.

In today's world we are facing cascading crises: climate change, food insecurity, water scarcity, the economic fall-out of COVID-19, inequality, insecurity and conflict, to name a few. There is a risk that young people of today will inherit a world that is even more chaotic than it is at present. We recognize that vulnerable people, communities and countries are disproportionately impacted. In particular children are affected by these unprecedented crises, including in many African countries. Urgent international action is needed.

Thankfully there are also opportunities. We have just heard many inspiring stories of people making a difference. In our

joint efforts to leave no child behind, we all need to support those efforts together.

I would like to highlight some of these opportunities:

- Firstly, Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30. We need to ensure that these new generations are fully empowered to realize their best potential. Perhaps we could start with including more young people in the UNICEF board – like today. Including young people in decision making and ensuring employment opportunities is key to reach sustainable development. The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda is a good example.
- Another opportunity is with digitalization: true global digital cooperation has the potential to boost the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. However, children and young people in different regions have unequal opportunities to be part of – and to shape – our digital future. Solutions must be found to close the current digital gender and age divides. We therefore look forward to continuing our

collective effort to establish a framework for global digital cooperation through a Global Digital Compact.

The only way to address today's crises is if we work hand in hand as equal partners, transcending borders and differences. We are dependent on each other if we want to provide a nurturing environment that fosters the well-being and development of every child. The SDG Summit will be an important moment to discuss how to do things differently, together.

UNICEF has an important role to play. We thank UNICEF's hardworking staff for their relentless efforts. And we encourage UNICEF to continue to work together with other UN agencies and other stakeholders to address the significant challenges we are facing.

In conclusion, children and young people are at the heart of our societies. Our collective commitment can pave the way for a harmonious world where every child's rights are acknowledged and upheld.