

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Hadi Hachem, Chargé d’Affaires, a.i.
of the
Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
at the
UNICEF First Regular Session
New York, 6 February 2024

Thank you Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election, and assure you of my delegation full support.

My delegation extends its gratitude to Executive Director **Catherine Russel** and UNICEF as a whole for their dedicated work and unwavering commitment to improving the well-being of children globally, and particularly their efforts in advocating for the children in Gaza who have endured over 120 days of unimaginable suffering as we speak.

Mr. President,

Executive Director **Russel** has described Gaza strip as “the most dangerous place in the world to be a child”. Every 10 minutes, a child is killed in Gaza and every hour, two mothers are killed. So far, Israel has killed more than 11,000 children in Gaza and left 25,000 orphaned. With children undergoing amputation without anesthesia, treatments on hospital floors, and the spread of diseases and malnutrition across the strip, it is no surprise that UNICEF Deputy Executive Director **Ted Chaiban** reported that children in Gaza are suffering “the most horrific conditions he’s ever seen”.

Furthermore, the long lasting impact of Israel’s aggression extends beyond physical and material devastation. Having lost so many family members, it is hard to comprehend the level of trauma these children are going to have to live with, forever. Gaza is truly “a graveyard for children”, as described by the Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. **Antonio Guterres**.

Mr. President,

Children in South Lebanon have also felt the brunt of the Israeli aggression. Three children have been killed by Israel and more than 80,000 people, out of which 30,000 children, have already been internally displaced. Another consequence is the closure of most schools in southern Lebanon, with more than 8,000 children and youth impacted by school closures. This aggression violates not only our children’s right to education but also their safety, well-being and mental health. No child should be forced to flee violence and forced to leave school whether in Lebanon or in Gaza.

Moreover, more than 345,000 vulnerable persons in host communities are in need of dire assistance, as the escalation of hostilities has affected the livelihoods of both IDPs and host

communities, and not just in affected areas, whereas people in Lebanon have been facing the consequences of the socioeconomic collapse, and the continuous presence of around 2 million Syrian displaced, whose burden has become unbearable.

Mr. President,

A journalist asked an injured child in Gaza:

What do you want?

The child answered: To live.

No child, wherever he or she comes from, should only dream of living and surviving. No child should be victim of such atrocities and no one should be granted a free pass to unleash a war on children.

I thank you Mr. President.
