



UNICEF Executive Board – General Statement

Item 2: Opening statement by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

Executive Board of UNICEF

First Regular Session

H.E. James Larsen, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

6 February 2024

As delivered

Thank you President, and I thank Executive Director Ms. Catherine Russell for her report earlier today.

Executive Director, I was particularly struck by your remarks concerning the devastating impacts of conflict and crisis on children’s wellbeing, and I think we acknowledge very much the work of UNICEF in addressing these very real challenges.

We sincerely thank UNICEF for its dedication to providing lifesaving assistance, and we acknowledge the work of its many employees in these extremely difficult environments, including Gaza, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Syria.



Australia's support to UNICEF for this vital work demonstrates our high regard for UNICEF's ability to deliver in some of the most difficult and complex of circumstances.

I also want to underscore Australia's strong support for UNICEF's important work on protecting and promoting the rights of adolescent girls. We are pleased this remains a priority for 2024.

Australia commends UNICEF on the impact achieved through our Pacific partnerships – including the training of health workers, delivery of water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, and provision of quality early learning and routine vaccinations to the region's children.

We continue to accord a very high priority to all of these activities.

We are also proud of UNICEF and Australia's role in procuring and delivering over 28.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses for the Pacific and Southeast Asia, which again demonstrates the practical and tangible benefits of collaboration.



To strengthen our partnership further, we would like UNICEF to explore how gender analyses and disaggregated data can better inform policies, programs, and resource allocation.

Importantly, we also call on UNICEF to ensure that diverse perspectives, including perspectives of First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, inform its work. We agree with the Executive Director's focus on climate change and impacts on vulnerable communities and cohorts.

Last year, Australia released a new international development policy that emphasised our dedication to genuine partnerships and locally led development.

We appreciate UNICEF's valuable inputs to the policy and its ongoing engagement on our forthcoming Gender Equality, Humanitarian, Disability Equity and Rights, and LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Engagement strategies.



Regarding UNICEF's Headquarters Efficiencies Initiative, Australia welcomes all efforts towards achieving the best allocation of resources and the best value for money. We look forward to continued transparency and engagement with UNICEF on these developments.

Finally, let me reiterate Australia's strong support for UNICEF's critical work, including the work of our National Committee, and we thank you for your vital contribution.