

## **UNICEF Executive Board First Regular Session 2024**

### **Item 4 Disability inclusion**

#### **Draft Joint Statement**

**To be delivered by Permanent Representative of Finland, Ambassador Elina Kalkku**

New York, February 7, 2024

**Mr/ Madam President, distinguished colleagues,**

I have the great honour of speaking on behalf of I have the great honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States, the EU as a donor and my own country, Finland.

For decades, UNICEF has been a pioneer for disability inclusion in the UN system. Through the adoption of the Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022–2030 (DIPAS), UNICEF has set up a bold vision and made crucial policy commitments to advance disability inclusion. These commitments are aligned with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).

These two strategies together provide a strong framework for accelerating disability-inclusive country programming and operations to achieve results at scale, based on data and evidence. In this regard, Country Programme Documents (CPD) are important vehicles to implement the commitments made and as such, they deserve our close attention.

Based on the Country Programme documents, it is evident that many great efforts have been made to translate these commitments into action. We commend especially the Cambodia (CPD), which has adapted disability inclusion as its priority.

In addition, we note with satisfaction the way the Gambian CPD pays attention to disability friendly WASH facilities and Madagascar CPD to the disability sensitive health services. The Philippines CPD raises the importance of child-sensitive public policy and Brazil the issue of physical and domestic violence against children with disability. We encourage the country teams to actively communicate the good work that is going on at country level.

Nevertheless, there is also room for improvement. Disability inclusion is not yet systematically reflected in the Country Programme documents, including the objectives, programme modalities, means of implementation, and indicators. We stress the importance to make

further efforts to integrate the key elements of the UNICEF's strategy in the Country Programme documents.

Two critical issues deserve particular attention. First, we underscore that disability inclusion should be coherently reflected in the CPD results frameworks. This would ensure that disability inclusion is consistently prioritised and measured.

Secondly, we emphasize the importance of disability disaggregated data. Proper data and information systems are required for robust planning and programme design. We urge UNICEF to continue investing in data that is comparable and disaggregated, including in national level data systems, and in collecting evidence on the results.

We encourage UNICEF and Country Teams to pay further attention to intersectionality and to the linkages between gender and disability. The situations of girls with disabilities deserve special attention. They are less likely, for example, to receive health care and assistive devices.

The CPDs could also better reflect how countries should prepare themselves for humanitarian disasters and develop disability inclusive preparedness plans, reflecting the special needs of children with disabilities.

We stress the full involvement and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative associations in strategic planning, decision-making and implementation of the programmes. For that purpose, forming close partnerships especially with organizations representing persons with disabilities is critical.

We would like to emphasize the potential of digital technologies in improving accessibility of services, such as healthcare or education for persons with disabilities. In addressing the digital divide, disability inclusion must be increasingly in our focus. Moreover, we are happy to see assistive technologies as a key focus area for UNICEF's own innovation work.

One important key factor to the success of disability inclusion in UNICEF has been the commitment by its senior management, at the highest possible level. This is critical for ensuring that the organization continues investing in technical capacity and relevant structures, and have sufficient human and financial resources to advance disability inclusion.

We would like to commend the excellent work carried out by UNICEF's disability team. You are setting the model for other agencies for how to move ahead with disability inclusive development and leaving none one behind.

Lastly, we would welcome the possibility to have disability inclusion regularly discussed in the UNICEF Executive Board.

Mr/Madam President, I thank you for your attention.