

Agenda Item 8
Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses towards
universal child benefits

Chair

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

We welcome this evaluation and Management's response and we congratulate UNICEF for the effort and resources dedicated to such a demanding study. The role of child benefits in the framework of social protection systems is of paramount importance. Therefore it is crucial for UNICEF to maximise the results of its support to Governments and work as effectively as possible towards the goal of universal social protection for all children.

We welcome the findings of this evaluation, which underline the relevance of UNICEF actions in the countries studied. This concerns in particular support to resource mobilisation by Governments for child benefits and contribution to capacity building at the national and sometimes sub-national levels.

We agree with the evaluation's recommendation to further focus on the generation of evidence and advocacy with all involved stakeholders at global, regional and country level, and we welcome that UNICEF has already started to develop a series of specific actions to that effect.

We share UNICEF's point on the need for more evidence on effectiveness and efficiency of expanding social protection for children to reach the SDGs. More evidence will also support creating interest and "buy in" from governments and other international institutions/donors.

We welcome UNICEF's efforts in leveraging its expertise in financing and social protection, and particularly the role played in identifying and deploying international and domestic financing options for child grants. We appreciate Management's commitment to intensify efforts, notably in terms of advocacy with other UN agencies, development banks as well as donor agencies, for increased investment in child benefit programs. However, in view of the evaluation findings that UNICEF's exploration of alternative financing options for Governments was limited in many countries, we would like to hear more about UNICEF's strategy to encourage innovative financing for social protection.

We support UNICEF's work on strengthening government capacities and take note of Management's commitment to follow the evaluation's recommendation and reinforce its support to sub-national and local governance in order to boost local implementation and accelerate results for children. In countries affected by conflicts, UNICEF support has been instrumental in bridging the gap between humanitarian and development interventions. However, we do agree with the evaluation recommendation and encourage UNICEF to be particularly cautious when being involved with governments which are party to a conflict. We would appreciate information on how UNICEF plans to address this issue.

We strongly support the recommendation to build partnerships with sister agencies, development partners, financial institutions and civil society and strive for joint approaches and harmonized messages on social protection. We appreciate UNICEF's leadership role in several global and regional initiatives and Management's commitment to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of support to governments. We encourage stronger linkages between social protection and other programme areas, including nutrition and child protection and suggest working with other partners on further developing the link between anticipatory action and social protection and ensure more integrated programming for children.

Lastly, at country level, the results of the studies can be an important input for our colleagues in EU Delegations to inform policy and program development. We share all recommendations and support country level coordination between UNICEF and EU Delegations regarding their implementation.

Thank you.