

2020 Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board
8–11 September 2020

**Closing statement by the President of the Executive Board
H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations**

11 September 2020

Excellencies, Executive Director Fore, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues:

We have reached the conclusion of this session of the Executive Board. It has been a very productive session, despite constraining circumstances.

I would like to thank you all for your extremely constructive contributions and support, and the lively debates that we had for each of the items shows the commitment and interest that you have for the mandate and work of the Board and UNICEF. I would like to congratulate and thank, in particular, our expert colleagues for their hard work, as they worked intensively together on 11 draft decisions which we have just adopted. And I would like to thank our presenters for the comprehensive reports and presentations that enriched our discussions.

We have discussed evaluation findings, heard about the power of research, debated resources and explored the humanitarian to development continuum.

Education was a constant theme throughout our discussions. We all agreed that it is vital that our children go back to school soon.

We have considered 10 country programme documents. During the discussions, we were able to get a sense of the thorough consultation process in-country involving the different stakeholders. We also heard the appreciation expressed by the concerned Governments for the work of UNICEF and the UN country team in their respective countries, as well as the challenges ahead as they implement the newly adopted country programmes.

Our discussions around the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, and the financial report on private fundraising and partnerships, illustrated the continuing significance of resource mobilization as well as utilization. Our core resources are critical for UNICEF to deliver, and the downward trend of regular resources is worrying. Flexible and predictable funding is the best way to ensure programme implementation.

Distinguished delegates: there is no doubt that 2020 has been a challenging year for the Board. But we also got much done. This year, over the three sessions we have adopted a total of 24 decisions, including the decisions related to the

midterm review of the Strategic Plan and midterm review integrated budget. And I would like to once again express my deep appreciation to the facilitators and experts, whose hard work and constructive approach made it possible to do so. The decisions are the bedrock of our work and enable us to move forward on the key issues.

Distinguished delegates, as I look back on our year, I recognize these as strategic topics for us as a Board. We have taken the time to discuss them in depth. We have considered how to overcome challenges, improve chances of success and increase the reach of UNICEF action. I believe that the momentum for positive change is of a good cadence. This bodes well for preparations for the next Strategic Plan, which I expect to be more adaptive and further integrate evidence and data-based programming.

We have been fortunate to have excellent guest speakers join us at different points of our discussion. At this session, we were joined by Mr. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and we had the opportunity to consider how to best link humanitarian and development programming. It was very reassuring indeed to see the strong engagement and collaboration between UNICEF and UNHCR.

The participation of guest speakers helps us to review our own work – as well as our joint efforts – from a different perspective. We all have much to learn from each other, hence our partnerships should be nurtured and deepened. We can capitalize on the innovation and expertise of our partners in the private sector as well. The support of the UN system to Governments around the globe will be more efficient and relevant as the country teams work more closely together, complementing each other.

Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues: As with any family, the UNICEF family is also going through a transition. It is time for us to say goodbye to the Secretary of our Board, Hai Kyung Jun... as she returns to UNHCR. I speak for the entire Board and the Bureau, Hai Kyung, you will be dearly missed. We are all very sad to see you go. We are grateful to you for your remarkable support throughout this difficult year. You have always been there with your usual grace and dignity, and with a solution, as we confronted the many challenges following the pandemic. You are indeed leaving behind an amazing legacy and a terrific team also. I am grateful to them, each one of them, for their great support throughout

the year. Thank you, Hai Kyung, and the very best in your next venture and a very big thank you to each one of the OSEB members.

I extend a warm welcome to Hai Kyung's successor, Mr. Gilles Fagninou, with whom I look forward to working closely over the next months. Gilles is no stranger to the Executive Board, having served as Deputy Secretary in the past, so we will surely be in good hands.

I would like to echo the Executive Director's warm words towards all departing senior UNICEF colleagues, and thank them for their outstanding contributions. I wish them the very best in the future.

Distinguished delegates, the COVID-19 pandemic took us on an unexpected course this year, which pushed us all to find innovative solutions to adjust to the situation. The response of UNICEF to the crisis was rapid and effective, and I thank Executive Director Fore and her entire team for making that possible. UNICEF staff around the world have proven their mettle this year with their courage and dedication and I applaud their efforts and achievements.

I would like to thank the remarkable team in the secretariat for ensuring seamless continuity in our work as a Board. It has been a challenging year, but

thanks to the secretariat, we have been able to fully exercise our oversight function.

We are grateful to you, Madam Executive Director, for your remarkable and inspiring leadership. You have led from the front during this unprecedented crisis. I have come to rely so much on your wise counsel and support. Thank you, Henrietta.

To my colleagues at the Board and my fellow Bureau members, I thank you for your flexibility in adapting to the virtual format, for your friendship, support and commitment to work together. I am truly grateful.

This will be our last formal session together. It has been an absolute honour to serve as your President and I am proud of our shared achievements.

I would like to end our session on a note of optimism. Despite the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to protect and save children continue. UNICEF is involved in many promising initiatives aimed at mitigating the devastating impact and helping Governments and communities to build back better.

I am impressed and grateful to see the commitment of Member States and encourage all of you to continue your unstinting support to the organization. I reiterate that we cannot let the pandemic become a children's crisis and must not let it threaten our achievements thus far with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, nor push the vulnerable into further disadvantage.

I concur with Executive Director Fore that the pandemic has changed our work, but not stopped it, and look forward to seeing where the next year will take us.

I thank you once again for your support and wish you all continued good health and safety.
