

FINAL SHORT VERSION FOR DELIVERY
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Henrietta H. Fore, UNICEF Executive Director
Executive Board
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Thank you, President Paulauskas for your statement — and welcome to the UNICEF Executive Board. Everyone across the UNICEF family looks forward to working with you over the coming year — which will be a significant one for children around the world, and for our organization, which turns 75 this year.

In the coming months, we will have a number of opportunities to recognize everything that our organization has achieved for children and young people over the decades. And to take pride in our UNICEF family — from our dedicated staff members, to our donors, partners and National Committees who do so much to support our work, to our UNICEF volunteers around the world.

But this year is not only a moment of reflection. It is also a moment of re-dedication to our mission.

COVID-19 has reminded us how fragile our progress can be, and how fragile our families and our world can be.

The world is still coming to terms with the full extent of the damage caused by COVID-19, because the damage is still happening. We see it in the dwindling income of families. In the global economy, which has suffered a deep recession and now faces a long recovery. In countries and communities alike. In the unequal distribution of the COVID vaccines. And in the damage wrought across all the systems upon which human development depends.

At the same time, humanitarian emergencies continue to spread and worsen. At this moment in history, we should be fighting the virus, making our world healthy for our children, and planting the seeds of recovery and development.

I know this is possible, because I have seen this dedication and hope first-hand when I speak to UNICEF staff members in our offices around the world. From our colleagues in Yemen and Syria. To South Sudan and Myanmar. To Afghanistan and the State of Palestine. To our

colleagues across Central America. And to India and Nepal, where the virus continues to spread at a rate far greater than our ability to respond.

Despite the challenges facing our world, these committed women and men are reminding us that we can overcome barriers to serve and support children and communities alike.

Faced with the gravest global crisis in generations, UNICEF made sure that children and young people did not face COVID-19 alone.

We quickly adapted our services and programming to overcome the barriers imposed by lockdowns, and transportation and logistics constraints.

With our sister UN agencies, NGOs, and public and private partners alike, we adjusted to all of the challenges on the ground.

And we stayed and delivered, helping communities contain the virus — while protecting health workers and children alike as they faced this challenge. Delivering supplies, information, water and sanitation support, and training.

We quickly translated our longstanding vaccine experience and expertise into a key role in the COVAX facility. We had speed and scale on our side.

We are working with manufacturers, and transportation and logistics companies to procure and transport vaccines, supplies and equipment — and with communities and health workers to prepare them to deliver and administer the vaccines across 92 low and middle-income countries.

And we are working shoulder-to-shoulder with governments and communities to re-build systems shattered by the pandemic — from health, water and sanitation systems, to education and protection systems.

Today, we will discuss the Executive Director's Annual Report, which outlines all that we achieved last year. Results that include, but also extend far beyond, our COVID-19 response.¹

We are also very proud of the trust that our generous donors — public and private — continue to place in UNICEF.

Last year was a record-breaking year. We saw increases in both public and private sector funding — primarily earmarked funding for programmes related to the COVID-19 response.

¹ Following stats from Executive Director's Annual Report (EDAR)

But last year was also a record-breaker in terms of our expenditures. We crossed — for the first time — \$6.5 billion in expenditures, or about four per cent higher than 2019. This increase was largely driven by higher programme expenditures in response to COVID-19.

So clearly, flexible, un-earmarked funding remains absolutely critical to our ability to mount an effective and lasting response. We need the sustained generosity of our donors more than ever.

As part of this, UNICEF is also creating our first-ever global innovative finance strategy, which will help accelerate and direct financial flows to support the needs of children and young people.

We are exploring a number of solutions, including blended financing instruments that combine public and private funding and impact investment funds that will link activities and investments for children to measurable impacts. We are doing this with other UN agencies, IFIs, foundations, and private sector partners.

I also look forward to our discussions this week on how our new Strategic Plan is progressing.

We will discuss the next steps of the Plan's development — including the integrated results framework, and how the QCPR is helping to shape the Plan as it progresses.

The Plan is also an opportunity to renew our organizational focus on key areas of work.

Gender is a good example. Today, we will discuss the annual report of our Gender Action Plan, with a focus on last year's progress in weaving gender equality across all of our programming. From health and education. To skills development and protection programming. To helping women and girls overcome the challenges of climate change — as they cope with dwindling access to natural resources, and spend more time securing water, food and fuel, exposing them to potential violence and exploitation.

We are also very excited about all the innovations that will help us accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

From solar powered water systems at the local level. To our GIGA initiative to map and connect every school in the world to the internet. To using satellite data and machine learning to predict population movements and malnutrition levels. To working with our private sector partners to develop Artificial Intelligence-powered products that can improve education, support

children with disabilities in new ways, and match young people to jobs. To using digital fundraising, blockchain and UNICEF's CryptoFund — the first of its kind in the UN.

And we are in the midst of discussions with the UN family as a whole to work together around three flagship initiatives aligned around key Sustainable Development Goals.

The first is “Reimagining Education: Digital Learning and Skills for All Children and Youth” — a plan to end the learning crisis by enabling every child and young person to access world-class digital learning and training solutions.

The second is “Water Security for All” — a plan to provide safe and affordable drinking water, climate resilient WASH services, early action to prevent water scarcity crises, and water co-operation for peace and stability. Water is the nexus where climate change meets health.

And the third is “No Time to Waste” — a proposal to improve diets, services and practices to prevent, detect and treat wasting in early childhood...and to stop child deaths and child stunting.

We see an exciting opportunity to gather the respective strengths, ideas and experience of the UN as a whole and IFIs around these issues. Especially as we continue supporting the repositioning of the UN development system.

We remain squarely focused on collaborating with our sister agencies to ensure that UN reforms have a measurable and transformative effect in countries' recovery and rebuilding efforts.

We have previously discussed many examples of how we are joining forces with our sister agencies to find efficiencies in cost and operation, while reducing duplication. This will remain a priority for UNICEF.

And as we collaborate with our partners outside of UNICEF, we are continuing our important work to modernize, simplify and streamline our operations inside our organization.

From country programme planning, to partnership management, to managing travel, services and consultants — the work we are doing will result in significant time savings for our staff members and reduce costs.

We are on track to completing most of our improvements by the end of the year, and will keep you updated on our progress as we move forward.

And we are continuing our journey to strengthen UNICEF's culture, and end racism and discrimination across our organization. I have received the final report from the Anti-Racism and

Discrimination Task Team, and we are currently discussing and implementing their recommendations.

Throughout all of this work, we will continue to rely on you — our Executive Board. Your oversight and guidance of our organization's work, your efforts around working methods, and your comments and reflections on Country Programme Documents — like the one we are reviewing today for Argentina — are all appreciated and valued by everyone at UNICEF.

For the poorest, recovery will likely take decades, and the full socio-economic impacts are still unclear. But with your guidance and support, we will work with children and young people every step of the way.

We are planning a global children's event at the end of the year. It will bring together public and private partners — and of course, children and young people themselves — to focus the world's attention on the evolving needs of our youngest generation. We hope to see you there.

Thank you. I look forward to our discussions this week.
