

UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD ANNUAL SESSION

STATEMENT BY H.E. DAME BARBARA WOODWARD, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON 1 JUNE 2021

Thank you very much indeed, Excellency, and thank you Executive Director Fore and to all the UNICEF staff for your dedication during the year: your COVID-19 response provided vital care and services to over 260 million children in more than 150 countries.

And it's been a great pleasure for the UK and a privilege to work so closely with UNICEF for over 70 years. And that partnership and commitment remains as strong as ever. Prime Minister Johnson's commitment to get 40 million more girls in school and 20 million more reading by age 10 in low and lower middle-income countries by 2026 are goals that we share with UNICEF.

The UK's decision to move our ODA spending target to 0.5% of GNI in 2021 was one of many hard decisions consequent on the COVID-19 pandemic. But I want to underline that the UK Government is committed to returning to 0.7% once the fiscal situation allows.

So looking ahead, we thank your team for the excellent draft Strategic Plan and for collaboration during its development. The draft provides a strong foundation to guide UNICEF's work in support of the SDGs and we look forward to its adoption in September.

In particular, I'd like to highlight five elements that are particularly welcome:

First, your determination to reach the poorest and most marginalised children against the backdrop of the first global increase in poverty in 20 years.

Second: as the number and duration of conflicts continue to rise, we support your plans for complementary programming that meets humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs by addressing immediate vulnerabilities while building long-term resilience and we encourage you to continue better integrate joint planning, assessment and delivery of programming with humanitarian-development-peace entities.

Third: your commitment to addressing the climate crisis, including reducing the environmental impact of your operations, and promoting child-sensitive climate policies. We look forward to UNICEF's active participation at COP26 in Glasgow.

Fourth: to encourage you to build on your leadership during the COVID response and recovery, including on procurement, which involved collaboration across UN and non-UN partners, and apply the operational lessons learned from the pandemic including playing an active role in the delivery of joint programming as a

key cornerstone of a coordinated “one-UN” country response under a Resident Coordinator.

Fifth and finally, to ensure resources are deployed to maximum effect, to ensure UNICEF’s country presence is fully aligned with the updated requirements identified in UN planning documents, like the new UN Sustainable Development Country Frameworks and Country Programme Documents.

I thank you.