

UNICEF Annual Session 2021

Nordic statement on item 4: Draft strategic plan

Mr. President,

I would like to deliver this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country Norway.

First, we would like to commend UNICEF for an ambitious and transformative draft, which reflects the urgency of the current situation, the need for concerted efforts, and the key role of UNICEF in ensuring progress in achieving child related development goals. Furthermore, we believe the draft strikes the right balance of keeping what works and changing for even greater impact.

We would like to also reiterate our praise for the inclusive approach of UNICEF in informing current draft, including extensive consultations with children and youth from all over the world.

Mr. President,

We welcome this opportunity to discuss the draft Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 at the Executive Board. Although this is UNICEF's document, we believe this consultation allows for an open and frank dialogue on the strategic direction of the organization.

A key Nordic position throughout the process has been that the Strategic Plan must be aligned with and follow-up on the guidelines and provisions of the 2020 QCPR. We are particularly pleased to note a strengthening of UNICEF's work on social protection and child poverty, climate and resilience, and on the integration of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. We welcome that social protection is revised as a goal area and appreciate that the capacity of UNICEF on this approach will be strengthened. We would encourage UNICEF to further strengthen the role of universal child benefits.

We commend UNICEF for a well-structured draft results framework, clearly aligned with the sustainable development goals and with a larger share of common indicators, in line with the guidance of the 2020 QCPR. We look forward to seeing how the framework is further harmonized with other UN organizations to prepare the ground for the reporting on joint results of the development system in countries of operation.

Mr. President,

We would like to use this opportunity to outline 7 areas we would like to see strengthened in the final version of the plan, to be presented and adopted at the September session:

- On human rights: To ensure that human rights are at the center of all UNICEF efforts, we would like for human rights, including gender equality and the rights of

persons with disabilities, to be systematically reflected, and duly monitored in the results framework. This would mean disaggregation for all relevant indicators across the five goal areas. We encourage UNICEF to strengthen governments and other duty bearers to meet their legal obligations and for human rights holders to claim their rights. It is important that this work is adequately resourced and expertise ensured.

- On leaving no one behind: We would like to see increased mention of how UNICEF contributes to leaving no one behind, and how this is operationalized. We would like to see this clearly reflected in the results framework of the plan.
- On education. We recognize UNICEF's essential role in education and commend UNICEF on their efforts this past year under challenging circumstances. We are particularly worried about the negative consequences the pandemic may have on education for adolescent girls. It is vital that young people are empowered to protect themselves from early- and unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other STDs and child marriages, which may negatively impact their education and their futures. Comprehensive Sexuality Education can provide girls and boys with the knowledge needed to protect themselves and to make informed decisions about their lives. We would therefore have expected to see a stronger focus on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the draft Strategic Plan.
- On the humanitarian mandate: While we are pleased to see resilience as a cross-cutting priority, we underline that humanitarian action goes beyond resilience. Humanitarian principles are fundamental in all humanitarian efforts. This must also be reflected in the results framework of the plan.
- On social protection: We appreciate the expanded work on social policy and social protection, ensuring children live free of poverty, and would encourage UNICEF to further strengthen the role of universal child benefits and shock-responsive social protection in its humanitarian and development programming, with a focus on strengthening government systems.
- On working across different goal areas: We appreciate the multi-sectoral approach of UNICEF. We would like to see increased mention of how UNICEF will strengthen its work across the different goal areas for increased impact.
- On partnerships: We would like to see increased mention of how UNICEF will work with other entities with tangential or partly overlapping mandates, including but not limited to a reference to the key role of UN Women in ensuring gender equality.
- On financing: As Nordic countries we must mention the need for flexible and predictable financing that goes beyond grant funding from traditional donors for an efficient implementation of the strategic plan. We encourage Unicef to provide a funding structure that is conducive for flexible and predictable funding.

Mr. President

I would like to conclude by thanking UNICEF for their efforts in preparing this draft, and also their commitment to ambitiously stake out the strategic direction for UNICEF in the next four years. This level of ambition is key if we are to fulfil the 2030 Agenda by the end of this Decade.

We stand ready to continue supporting UNICEF in these endeavours.