

First Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

08 – 11 February 2022

Intervention by the Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees to Item 2: Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

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Executive Director Russell, Mr President, National Committee colleagues, distinguished delegates,

It is an honor to speak on behalf of the 33 National Committees for UNICEF in this first Session of the UNICEF Executive Board.

On behalf of my peers and our devoted staff around the world, I would like to offer a warm welcome to UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. Your opening remarks give us inspiration and hope for everything that we will achieve together for every child.

Since 1947, National Committees have contributed more than 20 billion US dollars to UNICEF while upholding and promoting children's rights domestically and internationally. National Committees make UNICEF present in 33 of the 80 High-Income countries, accounting for more than 1.1 billion people in the world, including more than 230 million children and young people under 18.

One of the key pillars that support our special relationship with the organization is what many of us refer to as “One UNICEF”. Our powerful partnership, unique within the UN system, is built on our shared commitment to the mandate accorded to UNICEF by the United Nations to uphold all rights of all children everywhere. What this means in practice is that UNICEF and National Committees have distinct but complimentary roles. Still, to the eyes of our public, we are one so we should act like that and approach the outside world like that. UNICEF and National Committees are co-owners of results and accountable to each other in the pursuit of a better world for every child.

We live in changing times, with new challenges arising every day, threatening progress for children. But the National Committee role in the UNICEF ecosystem has also evolved, giving the organization more tools and more ways to achieve the new UNICEF Strategic Plan Goals and accelerate the SDGs.

National Committees are close to our public, our markets and our governments. We are agile, lean, cost-efficient, quick to adapt to changes and able to incubate new ideas efficiently and effectively. National Committees have agency, capacity, expertise to offer. All of these tools and more are available to you, Madam Executive Director! This reinforcement, combined with the incredible talent at UNICEF, can equip us to go further and faster together.

Executive Director Russell, Mr President, members of the Board, National Committee Colleagues,

As I wrote these remarks, they reminded me of the enormous strength and potential of our partnership. I hope they serve the same purpose to you. We have tremendous challenges ahead of us, but I have no doubt we can overcome them together.

Dear Executive Director,

National Committees look forward to meeting you in person and we wish you much success in your journey.

Thank you,

Suzanne Laszlo

Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees

Executive Director, UNICEF Netherlands