

**Statement by H.E. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations during the First Session of
the Executive Board of UNICEF – General Debate
February 8, 2022**

Thank you, Mr. President

Please allow me to congratulate you and other Members of the Bureau on your election and to express the appreciation of the Government of Guyana to all members of the Board for the important work that you are doing in ensuring that UNICEF's mandate is implemented in an effective and efficient manner.

I join in congratulating and welcoming the new Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Catherine Russell. Guyana wishes you a successful tenure and pledge our full commitment and cooperation to ensure that UNICEF continues to positively impact the lives of children everywhere.

It is a challenging time for UNICEF. The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and conflicts have made the world's children even more vulnerable. Their education has been disrupted, routine vaccinations have fallen behind and the overall progress towards the achievement of the sustainable goals has been stymied.

Through it all, UNICEF has been at the forefront, assisting governments and ensuring that recovery efforts take account of the needs of children.

In Guyana, UNICEF is actively supporting government's effort across various sectors. Whether it is in relation to the delivery of virtual education during lockdown periods, providing guidelines for reopening of schools, improving maternal and child health services, water and sanitation measures or supporting young advocates for climate action projects, UNICEF is present.

The focus on our indigenous and rural populations and on hard-to-reach underserved areas has been especially impactful in efforts to leave no one behind.

UNICEF's positive impact in Guyana has, in large measure, been because of the consultative and inclusive approach employed in the development of the successive Country Programme documents and in their implementation.

In this regard, we look forward to engaging with members of the Board on Thursday when Guyana's new country programme will be considered and to further strengthening our partnership with UNICEF.

At a time when developing countries are confronting pre-existing and contemporary challenges, joint action in conjunction with expert Agencies like UNICEF is critical.

I extend good wishes to the Executive Board for a successful first session.