



UNICEF
First Regular Session of the Executive Board
Agenda Item 4 (a): Country Programme Documents

Statement by Greece

Mr. President,

Members and Observers of the Executive Board,

It is a pleasure, indeed, to address you today at this regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board.

Allow me, first, to welcome the new Executive Director and wish her all the best in her new duties.

It is a great honour to stand before you and present my country's first-ever UNICEF Programme, which aims at safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of all children in Greece.

As you are well aware, during the last decade, Greece had to overcome a severe economic crisis and an unprecedented number of migrant and refugee arrivals, including unaccompanied and separated children.

The onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges, as well as the need for policies and measures dedicated to alleviating the pressure and protecting the most vulnerable, notably children.

For us, the protection of the Rights of the Child is a priority, both at the national level, as we are streamlining relevant policies through the first National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child, and at the international level, given our strong commitment to the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The pinnacle, however, of our efforts towards the comprehensive protection of children is our cooperation with UNICEF.

The 5-year Country Programme for Greece constitutes an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to join forces in order to assist and support children in need.

Being the first of its kind, this initiative is essentially a combination of measures, which can serve as a roadmap and a model for other countries as well; especially, given that challenges are increasing and international cooperation is the only way forward.

The Programme moves beyond the existing scope of our bilateral cooperation with UNICEF, which has focused so far on the provision of humanitarian assistance related to the migration and refugee crisis.

On the contrary, it aims at addressing issues affecting all children; its significance is the shift from a humanitarian to a development perspective, in line with the SDGs desideratum of leaving no-one, and no child for that matter, behind.

The Programme is also in line with the Secretary General's strategic vision for the future, as described in "Our Common Agenda", which we fully support.

Protection, education, and youth empowerment are the foundations of the Programme; its broad scope will encourage Greek Authorities, NGOs and other International Organizations currently present in Greece to work in tandem with UNICEF, in order to maximize its deliverables.

Partnerships and engagement with private sector stakeholders, aiming at leveraging funding, influence and innovation, will serve as a catalyst for the realization of the Programme's goals.

And here I would like to stress the role of the private sector in the Programme, since it is 100% funded by alternative resources and not by UNICEF's own funds. Therefore, rest assured that UNICEF's own funds will rightly keep being invested in Programmes of developing and lower-income countries.

We are confident that, by taking stock of UNICEF's expertise and experience and combining it with our own national initiatives, the future of our children and youth shines brighter than ever.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my country's endorsement and whole-hearted support of the Programme.

In anticipation of its smooth and successful implementation, we are looking forward to its adoption, together with the other 13 country programmes, by the Executive Board today.

Thank you.