European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) and UNICEF Partnership

I. Background on ECHO

1. ECHO was created in 1992 as the “European Community Humanitarian Office” and became the European Commission’s Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection in 2010. ECHO has provided $17 billion of humanitarian assistance in 140 countries. ECHO’s global budget in 2012 is EUR800 million (approximately $995 million). More than half of this amount has been for Africa, while ECHO support for the Middle East and the Mediterranean region has doubled since 2011. The European Union's humanitarian assistance is based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

II. ECHO-UNICEF Partnership

2. The partnership between ECHO and UNICEF was established in 1993. It has allowed UNICEF to assist and protect children in key emergencies in 56 countries, in the sectors of nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection, psycho-social support, cash transfers and disaster preparedness. This partnership has evolved over the years. It addresses policy issues on children in key areas such as nutrition, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction and resilience. ECHO and UNICEF also work together in advocating for children’s rights in emergency situations.

3. UNICEF in its partnership with ECHO has taken great strides to enhance response and coordination capacity and effectiveness. This has translated in strong support for the cluster approach. ECHO and UNICEF also work together in moving forward with the “Transformative Agenda” process to enhance leadership, coordination and accountability in humanitarian action.

4. ECHO advocates for a comprehensive approach to its food assistance policy that takes into account the nutritional dimension. Therefore, nutrition is a top priority for both ECHO and UNICEF. Furthermore, the ECHO-UNICEF partnership has helped to bridge short-term emergency funding support from ECHO with longer-term EU funding instruments. UNICEF and ECHO work closely together to strengthen resilience at the community level, for example, in response to the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and under the Global Alliance for the Resilience Initiative, which is led by ECHO and in which UNICEF participates.

Funding

5. Over the last few years, the European Commission’s funding to UNICEF’s humanitarian assistance has substantially increased: from $36 million in 2008 to $126 million in 2011, making them the largest contributor to UNICEF’s humanitarian assistance. The ECHO-UNICEF partnership covers 27 countries in emergency or in post-crisis recovery.