STATEMENT
OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
BY
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AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
DURING THE
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OF THE
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CONFERENCE ROOM 4

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Mr. President,

I thank you for giving me the floor. I make this statement on behalf of the African Group. The Group is pleased with the skillful manner that you continue conducting the affairs of this Executive Board since early this year. The African Group expresses confidence in your leadership and pledges to continue supporting you and the bureau throughout our engagements.

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks Mr. Anthony Lake, UNICEF’s Executive Director, for his insightful and comprehensive remarks on the activities that UNICEF undertook in the past year and those that it intends to carry out under the new strategic plan. The African Group fully supports these initiatives and pledges to continue partnering with UNICEF in order to achieve sustained economic growth and deliver for children.

Mr. President,

The African Group is pleased with UNICEF’s great progress, as explained by Mr. Lake this morning, made during the past year saving the lives of millions of children through emergency interventions and delivery of life-savings vaccines, providing nutrition and healthcare, supporting education and promoting children’s rights. This was possible due to UNICEF’s trail-blazing engagement and its collaborative efforts with different stakeholders under the umbrella of Committing to Child Survival: A promise Renewed. Moving forward, the Group urges for strengthened partnerships, learning and sharing experiences with the goal of reaching more disadvantaged children.

Mr. President,

In January 2012, the Secretary-General presented his five-year, five-point plan for his second term in office. In June 2012, the Rio+20 Conference concluded with a strong emphasis on dealing firmly with poverty and other global challenges. At the end of the same year, the General Assembly gave a clear strategic development trajectory by adopting the QCPR and emphasizing on reduction of poverty and spurring sustainable development. All of these processes encapsulated what the United Nations should be engaged and provided the solid foundation of the two important processes currently underway; the development of the new Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and the Post-2015 development framework. By making the process inclusive, informative and interactive, UNICEF has done great work as regards the Strategic Plan. The African Group believes that on the right path and is convinced that the final document will be reflective of our collective aspirations.
Mr. President,

In many respects, Africa is taking-off. This is the fastest growing region in the world. New and ambitious economic frameworks are in place, governance and accountability systems have vastly improved and technology and innovation is taking root in every country despite the biting global economic and financial crisis. This points towards an overwhelming desire to succeed despite biting challenges such as rapidly growing populations, cyclical natural disasters, extreme poverty and ever-rising food and fuel prices. As we develop the next strategic plan 2014-2017 and an integrated budget, we must be cognizant that our outcomes and outputs must match this ambition, spur economic growth and tackle these challenges. Africa’s urgency to surmount these challenges must be seized by UNICEF and indeed the entire United Nations system to engage in better programming through setting targets and having indicators and outputs aimed alleviate suffering of the lowest quintile for which the equity approach is designed.

Mr. President,

On the draft Strategic Plan, the African Group appreciates the stated vision, the impact-areas narrative and the result matrices. The Group believes that the standalone seven impact areas in the draft Plan sufficiently address Africa’s current concerns. The Group further believes that goals relating to health, education, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and child protection can easily be achieved. We however caution the fashioning of the indicators as merely providing humanitarian support. UNICEF, being also a development agency must similarly proactively support the nations’ development initiatives so as to reduce incidences of fire-fighting. Our work will be made much easier if we championed new technologies, capacity building, promote knowledge sharing particularly through South-South Cooperation and promoting social equality. In this regard, we believe that leveraging the existing resources, political will, partnerships and technological innovation must be prioritized.

Mr. President,

The African Group appreciates that UNICEF continues to seek ways to improve operations in the field. The Annual report has outlined how management tools such as the Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION) have enabled standardized results-based planning and reporting across programme thus helping improve transparency and accountability. The group looks forward to this tool being mainstreamed in the new draft Strategic Plan in order to enhance delivery of outputs.

Mr. President,

Whereas there has been a marked improvement in many areas of work the focus of UNICEF, there are a few issues that the group would like to share:
1. Child survival rates have been uneven and where there have been positive results, these gains need to be sustained. The existing disparities in child deaths rates should be reduced between urban and rural populations, across wealth quintiles, gender and between children from families with more or less education and among children facing marginalization and exclusion. The uneven proportion of girls not attending primary school particularly in emergencies and post-crisis transitions also needs to be addressed and interventions aimed at eliminating violence, increasing security and protection need to be strengthened.

2. In the past decade there has been an increase in resources and political commitment to address HIV and AIDS. This in turn has resulted in decreasing rates of HIV prevalence and improved outcomes for HIV infected persons. However, the group notes with great concern that prevention of HIV infections among adolescents were less successful and this will require urgent targeted adolescent programming strategies in order to deal with this challenge. At the same time, UNICEF should continue prioritizing the prevention of mother-to-child transmissions to curb the spread of HIV.

3. We recognize the great effort UNICEF has put into strengthening social welfare, social protection, justice, education and health services to better protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse. UNICEF needs to review systemic challenges with regard to demonstrating results at impact level which will help in implementing further interventions and sharing of lessons learnt.

4. It is also worth noting UNICEF’s contribution towards the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data to promote policies and programmes that benefit women and children. This has also led to strengthening national capacity to monitor the situation of children which we hope can yield positive results in improving the situation of children around the world.

5. With regard to organizational performance, we are pleased to note the enormous savings from inter agency activities and coherence in working with other agencies. While we encourage further cost cutting measures, the Group cautions that these savings should be reinvested into programmes and cost-cutting measures should not impact negatively on the organization’s ability to deliver on its programmes.

Finally, Mr. President, the African Group reiterates its support to UNICEF and the leadership. The group would like to specially thank the Africa regional offices for the excellent work that they continue to perform and looks forward to partnering together to achieve the results for children.

I thank you!