Mr President, Executive Director, Ladies and Gentlemen

First, let me express thanks to Executive Director Tony Lake for his leadership, for his forward-looking statement this morning, and for his commitment to regular, comprehensive and frank dialogue with the Executive Board.

**MDG Delivery: Planning for post 2015**

Ireland welcomes UNICEF’s many achievements in 2012 which have contributed to concrete progress towards achieving the MDGs. But it is also clear that, with two and a half years to go before the MDG ‘finish line’, MDG achievement and acceleration must be to the fore, we need to pick up the pace.

Perhaps the most critical point made in the Annual Report is that the gains made towards realising the Goals conceal widening disparities - between the richest and the poorest, between the privileged and the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The focus on equity is an essential tool to address these disparities. We strongly welcome everything that UNICEF is doing to develop this tool and to promulgate its use across the UN system.

In the case of each MDG target, we will need to drill down and examine hidden disparities and inequities. In areas where MDG delivery fell short, we will need a forensic focus on why this is so and how remaining barriers and obstacles can be overcome.

As we seek to fashion the post 2015 development framework, UNICEF will have Ireland’s full support in ensuring that we target the most vulnerable children and their communities.

**Food and Nutrition Security**

Ireland continues to work hard, to make nutrition central to development. We see UNICEF as an essential partner in this effort. Like UNICEF, Ireland has been a strong advocate of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement and its focus on maternal and child under-nutrition for the critical 1,000 Day window of opportunity from pregnancy to the age of two.

In April, Ireland hosted a major international conference to bring together the hunger, nutrition and climate agenda. We invited policy makers, including the Executive Director, and grassroots practitioners, so that we could listen to and learn from the very people who are enduring the crisis of failed crops, inundation, erosion, rising food prices hunger and under nutrition.
By placing people at the centre of these discussions, a clear picture of the challenges facing the most vulnerable people emerges. Empowering grassroots practitioners and giving them the right platform to discuss their realities and solutions makes them the most convincing advocates for the policy change and action.

As a follow up to this, Ireland recently pledged to double its spend on nutrition by 2020. The return on investment in nutrition is very high. The difference to a life, to a future, is immeasurable.

**Linking the Humanitarian and Development Agendas**

Ireland’s newly launched policy on International Development presents a clear direction for the years ahead, and one of our top priorities is building stronger resilience.

We all know the challenge of effectively linking the humanitarian and development agendas. It is easy to endorse the concept; it is much more difficult to ensure that linkage actually happens on the ground.

With its extensive presence in the field, and its dual mandate of emergency response and longer term development activities, UNICEF is particularly well placed to advance this linkage.

The time to build resilience is before the crisis hits. We must ensure that our interventions strengthen people’s livelihoods before the peak of the crisis, that they are targeted towards the most vulnerable groups in the most affected areas, and that they are well coordinated around government preparedness plans.

Like UNICEF, Ireland is working to support preparedness across a range of countries, with our starting point always being the coping mechanisms and strengths of local populations.

**Gender Equality**

Ireland welcomes UNICEF’s progress in putting strong systems and structures in place to more effectively mainstream gender equality. We recognise however that gender equality and gender mainstreaming, as a programme priority, needs to be explicitly stated in programme documents and in the reporting of results.
Gender equality is of course linked to other policy priorities such as health, education and nutrition. Education is in turn linked to children’s rights and emergency spending. It is important that we see the linkages between the different thematic areas, and to gain an understanding of the extent to which much of UNICEF’s work is mutually reinforcing. It is therefore important that a new Gender Action Plan is seen as an integral part of the new Strategic Plan.

On that note, I would like to commend UNICEF for the inclusive and participatory process conducted over the past few months in developing the new Strategic Plan. On the whole we believe it is a good draft, with a strong contextual framework, that takes into account the recommendations of the QCPR and is clearly informed by previous lessons learned.

**Delivering Better Results**

We encourage wholehearted commitment to all initiatives which promote more joined up UN responses – ranging from “Delivering as One” to the “Transformative Agenda”.

Ensuring that the UN development system delivers as one and leverages key partnerships is essential. It will also help ensure the UN development system remains focussed as the key strategic responder to global challenges, as well as an essential partner in supporting countries in their development efforts.

The emphasis on innovation matters both for the equity agenda and more generally. It is essential that UNICEF keeps innovating, adapting, and further improving its performance. Across so many areas, much has been achieved but the challenges remain formidable.

Finally Mr. President,

Let me reiterate that, as UNICEF gears up to meet these formidable challenges – and particularly as we approach the MDG finish line and begin our preparations for the successor arrangements – it can count on Ireland’s unavering support.