Sweden’s Statement on Annual Report of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Mr. President,

I would like to thank Mr. Lake and Ms. Gita Gupta for their presentations of UNICEF’s results during 2012 and other highlights from the annual report.

Sweden commends UNICEF for all the progress made in 2012, and I also would like to extend our most sincere appreciation to UNICEF’s very professional and dedicated staff, many of whom work under difficult conditions and in areas with threats to their security.

We appreciate UNICEF’s strong contribution towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the work that is on-going in relation to the post 2015 agenda. Sweden was pleased to work with the Government of Botswana, the WHO and UNICEF on the post 2015 global health thematic consultation, and we encourage UNICEF to continue to be engaged in this issue together with Governments, CSOs and children.

We believe that the annual report could have benefited from a deeper analysis on lessons-learned, trends and challenges. For example, and as pointed out by Sweden also in relation to last year’s annual report, the results analysis under each focus area would have benefitted from an analysis of progress and challenges in relation to the respective situations for girls and boys.

In September the Executive Board will adopt the new Strategic Plan, and we are pleased to see that the draft Strategic Plan 2014-2017 reflects the unfinished agenda for children.

Sweden strongly support UNICEF’s increased ambition to reach vulnerable, disadvantaged and excluded children. The equity approach is an important instrument towards this end. Only focusing on the most disadvantaged or marginalized would undermine the human
rights principle of non-discrimination. It is important for Sweden that the Strategic Plan clearly spells out UNICEF’s mission and universal mandate based on the Convention of the rights of the child – to promote the rights of every child, everywhere, in everything that the organization does.

To fulfill the rights of the child, it is necessary to have a stronger focus on gender equality. This is also an outcome of the review of UNICEF’s present Mid Term Strategic Plan as well as from the experiences of the MDG process.

For example, we know that the survival of children is closely related to the level of education of their mothers. Promoting gender equality in all areas of life and enabling girls and boys to have access to quality education is one of the most strategic investments we can make.

Girls and young women aged 15 to 19 make up a majority of those who die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth. Early marriage and early pregnancy pose significant challenges to the life prospects of girls, and must be prevented.

To effectively promote gender equality we cannot focus only on women, mothers and girls. It is also necessary to focus on the situation of boys and to engage boys, men and fathers.

Mr. President,

Violence against children continues to be one of the most serious obstacles to the child’s survival, health and development. UNICEF’s work to protect children from all forms of violence is achieving impressive progress and the systematic work is now reaching a state of momentum.

We are pleased to see that child protection continues to be a focus area in the new Strategic Plan. Child protection is at the same time a crosscutting issue and relevant for all areas in the strategic plan. Substantial resources are therefore necessary to continue to deliver on achieved progress and to meet new expectations in the field. Sweden underlines the
importance of UNICEF as a knowledge-based organization. Investments in research and institutional capacity and competence must therefore continue.

Advocacy for child rights, including elimination of violence against children, is one of the best ways to achieve change and long term, sustainable results. Sweden encourages UNICEF to act in favor of applying advocacy as a strategic working method in parallel with the implementation of service delivery activities. UNICEF should empower children and adolescents to act as agents of change and to participate in planning and policy-making. The National Committees also have an important role in this regard.

Finally, we welcome the increase in regular resources and want to see a trend towards less restrictive earmarking and increased core and thematic support.

Thank you.