Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the United States, let me first warmly thank Executive Director Tony Lake for his annual report and for his outstanding leadership of UNICEF, and express our deep appreciation to UNICEF staff worldwide for their dedication, courageous work, and achievements.

UNICEF continues to be at the forefront of major advances in children’s health and well-being, including the significant decrease in under-5 child mortality. Following last June’s Child Survival Call to Action, 168 governments, 209 civil society partners, and 220 faith-based organizations have pledged further action on Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, and committed to making decisive gains against preventable child and maternal deaths. A Promise Renewed, launched at the Call to Action, has now become a movement at the global and national levels that the United States is proud to support with UNICEF and other partners.

UNICEF’s tireless work to increase vaccination rates remains among its most impressive achievements, including in crisis zones like Syria, where over 1.3 million children -- 92% of the target—have been vaccinated. We also welcomed UNICEF’s confirmation that maternal and neonatal tetanus was eliminated in six more countries in 2012, and we support your call to redouble efforts to give the most underserved and vulnerable children a chance at life. We are further pleased that UNICEF continues to focus on access to safe education for girls, disabled children, and other vulnerable groups, and that you have strengthened your commitment to education in emergency and post-crisis situations, where over 40 percent of out-of-school children live. We also appreciate UNICEF’s continuing work on water and sanitation issues, both in schools and in the home.

UNICEF has helped bring new urgency to the issue of nutrition, and stunting in particular. We greatly appreciated your participation in the G8 Nutrition for Growth summit that galvanized pledges and international attention and helped build momentum for action on the critical issue of under-nutrition.

We were also delighted to see the emphasis on children with disabilities when
UNICEF launched its annual State of the World’s Children report last month. This focus will help shine an essential light on millions of children who are otherwise underserved, disadvantaged, or ignored. We encourage UNICEF to accelerate these efforts.

Mr. President, on the humanitarian front, we support UNICEF’s strong commitment to the Transformative Agenda, and to improving leadership, coordination, and accountability in humanitarian response. Empowered Humanitarian Coordinators, working with capable Humanitarian Country Teams, are essential to the delivery of lifesaving support to those most in need. We encourage UNICEF to continue to nominate top candidates to the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator Pools.

The United States also welcomes the first global evaluation of child protection in emergencies, which can provide a crucial underpinning for developing practical frameworks with governments and specific action plans to address children’s needs in situations to no child should ever have to face. The United States particularly recognizes UNICEF’s critical work in Syria, where children have been victimized by protracted armed conflict, and where our ability to provide assistance is hampered by a wide range of obstacles, from procurement to lack of access—all in the face of escalating violence and a swelling tide of displaced children and families. While we press for urgent action to end conflict in Syria, we remain grateful for UNICEF’s expanded presence and will continue to partner with you to fill in the many gaps in support for Syrian children, both inside and outside the country.

Mr. President, effective oversight and transparency in UN operations remains a priority for the United States, and we applaud UNICEF for being the first UN agency to adopt and implement a decision to make all internal audit reports publicly available. We also welcome UNICEF’s efficiency gains through initiatives such as saving $5 million through increased inter-agency activities, paperless meetings, and less travel. All of these measures will help UNICEF focus scarce resources on those most in need.

We also encourage you to continue to strengthen UNICEF’s evaluation functions and target evaluation resources where they will have the most value for institutional learning, innovation, and strategic decision-making. The new draft evaluation policy is a strong start, and we look forward to your continued leadership in this area.
We would also highlight the importance of data—its sufficiency and quality, its ability to be disaggregated. This is a larger issue on which we welcome UNICEF’s ideas about how best to use data to underpin UN development efforts.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with UNICEF leadership, fellow Board members, and other partners as the organization embarks on a new Strategic Plan, and we will offer some specific thoughts in that regard tomorrow. The United States remains a steadfast and committed partner of UNICEF and looks forward to our ongoing collaboration to advance the essential work of this organization. Thank you.