The Netherlands – Statement on the 2012 Annual Report of the Executive Director of UNICEF: Progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan (item 3 Annual Session 2013)

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking the Executive Director for his opening statement and for the informative Annual report. We welcome the achievements in the five focus areas and the clear way in which they are presented in the report. Allow me to make a few remarks.

First, The Netherlands wants to commend the UNICEF staff, especially those working in dangerous environments, for their dedication, their commitment to knowledge and experience and most of all to the well-being of children everywhere.

We appreciate the strong equity and human rights based approach in the report, as well as in the draft Strategic Plan. The report clearly outlines that inequalities in fragile, conflict-ridden situations and in middle-income countries without pro-poor policies continue to affect the most disadvantaged children, who do not profit enough from general policies and programs. Therefore, we consider this approach essential, especially in fragile states. The strengthening of the linkages between humanitarian and development assistance, as indicated in the QCPR, is important to achieve sustainable results across the five focus areas. The way in which UNICEF links normative and operational work is another important contributing factor to sustainability, as is the decentralized approach, where strategy is guided by needs.

Child protection forms the heart of UNICEF’s mandate. The many achievements in this focus area are truly impressive. The Annual report states that 29.5 million children were registered at birth in 81 countries. The Netherlands considers this an important area of UNICEF’s work, because the protection of any child starts with its birth registration. A child that is not registered does not exist as a citizen,
and is vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This child often misses out on health and education benefits and is not able to fulfill its full potential in society.

As the population of the poorest countries will triple until 2050, the growing youth bulge merits more attention from UNICEF. Investments in early childhood survival should go hand in hand with the safe, healthy and emancipated development of adolescent boys and girls. The need for more inclusive economic growth, and for safeguarding the stability of societies also warrant this. We welcome the fact that the draft Strategic Plan pays attention to this.

We are pleased that UNICEF continued to lead the United Nations Girls Education Initiative and welcome the emphasis in the draft Strategic Plan on gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women as priority outcomes. We also welcome the progress made in education in emergencies and post-crisis transition situations and in the area of peace building, education and advocacy.

The Netherlands compliments UNICEF with the progress that was made towards an Aids-Free Generation through preventing mother-to child transmissions. We are concerned though, that UNICEF was less successful in preventing HIV infections among adolescents and encourage UNICEF to continue with its investments in this area.

Important achievements were also made in focus area 5, policy advocacy and partnerships. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys that were done in 2012 provided a wealth of information on indicators that are used by the UN system as a whole. We consider the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis and the launch of the first ever Global Framework for Social Protection as important steps forward, and welcome the fact that in 104 countries social protection interventions were made.

Mr. President,

Two remarks regarding the organizational performance to close my statement.

First, we welcome the emphasis on strong enterprise risk management and the work that has been done by the Internal Audit Office and the Evaluation Function.
The Netherlands considers the qualitative and independent functioning of these offices, together with the effectiveness of the programs, one of the main criteria for our trust in the organization as a whole, and thus for financial support. It is essential that these offices have enough personnel and financial resources at their disposal.

Second, The Netherlands commends UNICEF for its continued commitment to innovation and future-oriented policies. In this regard, we support the important step to join the International Aid Transparency Initiative and the pioneering of the concept of ‘sustainability audits’ in its WASH programs in Eastern and Southern Africa. We are also glad to see the renewed cooperation with the World Bank, which can lead to more synergies in programs and to sustainable strengthening of the rights of children.

Thank you, Mr. President.