UNICEF Executive Board Annual Meeting 2013, 18 - 21 June 2013

Agenda Items 3 & 4: Annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF and UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017

Statement by Switzerland

Mr President, Mr Executive Director

Switzerland would like to thank the Executive Director for the presentation of the UNICEF Annual Report. We also express our warm thanks and admiration to the UNICEF staff for their dedicated work under difficult conditions and often in dangerous field contexts. We will comment on both the Annual Report and the draft Strategic Plan 2014 to 2017 in this statement. Both documents are interlinked. We appreciate the systematic and open manner how UNICEF did use the lessons from the Annual Report and many evaluations to shape the strategic foundation for the coming years. This enables UNICEF and members of the Executive Board to lead informed discussions and take sound decisions. The Annual Report shows remarkable progress in implementation. The impressive decline of specific numbers of mortality, out-of-school children and underweight cases are just a few examples reflecting the effective work of UNICEF. We appreciate the frank description regarding challenges and work yet to be done. We commend UNICEF for the significant savings mentioned under the organisational efficiency. The contrast between the potential to make full use of the unique UNICEF competence and experience to scale up further on one side and the declining financial resources, especially long term core resources on the other side are a matter of concern. Switzerland remains committed to continue the emphasis on core funding and continues efforts to further enhance predictability of funding.

Mr. President,

Let us shift our main attention now to the draft UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017. The plan is a distinctive opportunity to adapt UNICEF’s strategic orientation to a rapidly changing global context, innovations and a set of new instruments, tools and policies. It is crucial that the strategy and results frame can be easily communicated and understood by a broad audience ranging from stakeholders at the field level to policy makers. Further efforts to simply and prioritize the framework would certainly help in this regard.

We would like to compliment UNICEF on the participatory drafting process and all the efforts made throughout the elaboration so far. We value the translation of the coherent state-of-the-art vision into a strategic document focusing on the most disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable children, while ensuring the sound integration of humanitarian response and systematic embedding of the UNICEF SP into the overall UN programme. We applaud the
concentration on equity, a rights-based approach and on the promotion of gender equality.

**Results-based-management** has to be at the core of our attention. Two specific remarks from our side related to the results framework: Outcomes are overlapping with mandates of other UN-agencies. We would like to see clearer indications on the interagency cooperation in areas such as health / DRR. Furthermore, we would welcome a stronger reflection on cross-sectoral outcomes.

Concerning the UN Reforms and coherence, Switzerland appreciates UNICEF’s declared commitment towards the **Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review** QCPR emphasized under several chapters in the draft narrative of the SP. We commend UNICEF for the engagement and commitment as a chair of the UNDG advisory group and encourage to further engage in the process in order to assure the full implementation of the relevant QCPR mandates. UNICEF’s foreseen contribution of 14 Mio USD to the Resident Coordinator (RC) System as stated in the draft integrated budget is a further indicator of UNICEF’s commitment to an efficient UN-system in line with QCPR.

The Integrated budget provides indications related to the allocation of funds to the seven proposed focus areas. We request UNICEF to share additional information on the allocation criteria and rationale related to the proposed integrated results and resource framework. We expect that resources for evaluation functions will be reflected in a transparent and independent manner in the integrated budget.

With regard to the **outcomes**, we would appreciate if UNICEF could explain further the rationale behind the *increase in focus areas* from five to seven. We welcome the progress in addressing gender equality in the strategic plan and we encourage intensifying the efforts to build on these aspects throughout your efforts and programmes: gender needs to be addressed and reflected in a more systematic and coherent way. Gender equality should be an essential part of the equity agenda.

We refer now to the **Humanitarian** Aspects in the strategic Plan. Switzerland congratulates UNICEF on its engagement in Humanitarian action and on taking humanitarian reform agenda very seriously. Switzerland welcomes UNICEF’s lead role in many sectors, the focus on preparedness and response, as well as on reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience.

Switzerland welcomes the fact that humanitarian action is reflected in the results framework tables of the new SP with indicators under all seven focus areas. We would appreciate clear indicators for monitoring the humanitarian transformative agenda implementation and more prominence of protection activities in SP. This will allow for a more accurate tracking of humanitarian activities and hence further improve monitoring quality. In terms of budget allocation, humanitarian action accounts for almost one third of UNICEF’s total operations. What impact does the ambitious humanitarian agenda of the new SP have on the overall resource allocation?
Concerning risk management, UNICEF’s strong engagement in difficult contexts asks for a robust response to risks. The draft narrative of the SP should provide more information on UNICEF’s strategic approach towards risks and the risk management strategy, including the cooperation with other UN agencies in this area.

We consider Child Protection and Early Childhood Development as a core issue within UNICEF’s overall mandate. This should be reflected accordingly in the next SP and resource allocation. More funds should be allocated especially for the development dimension of child protection. The implications of growing scientific evidence regarding the critical importance of early childhood development (ECD) for future learning achievements, health outcomes, productivity and social behaviour should be taken into account.

Switzerland shares the commitment and vision of UNICEF regarding the importance of access to safe and sustainable sanitation, hygiene and drinking water in support of the realization of the human right to safe water and adequate sanitation. We hope that cooperation and synergies among stakeholders can be strengthened further in future. UNICEF’s support to large scale promotion of evidence-based interventions that extend water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services based on equity principles to unreached and marginalized populations is most relevant. It is of equal importance that our common vision builds on an integrated approach to water as a fundamental enabler of sustainable development and primary resource for social well-being, economic development and environmental security. Thus we strongly advocate for approaches that go beyond WASH and include the challenges faced with regard to sustainable water resources management and wastewater management and water quality.

We conclude with thanking you again for the substantial dialogue and excellent documentation of the joint elaboration of the new strategic framework. We remain committed and are looking forward to supporting the final steps of the elaboration of UNICEF’s new strategic plan.

Thank you for your attention.