STATEMENT BY
MS. BIBI SHELIZA ALLY
DELEGATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing my delegation’s congratulations for the excellent manner in which you are steering the work of the Bureau. We assure you of our continued support.

My delegation thanks Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for his leadership and engagement with the Board. We welcome UNICEF’s Annual Report on progress and achievements against the MTSP. We find the Report to be comprehensive and informative, providing valuable insight into the activities of UNICEF including results achieved and challenges faced.

UNICEF has a special value in the UN system, as the principal entity working to improve the lives of children in a broad range of areas such as protection, rights, health and education. As we celebrate the many achievements made for children we recognize that there is still much work to be done. In this regard, Mr. President, allow me to highlight just a few of the key areas we have noted in the Report and to share some of our experiences in those areas.

Mr. President,

We note that under-five mortality continued its steady decline, falling 47 percent from approximately 12 million in 1990 to 6.9 million deaths in 2011. While this is reflective of some progress, it is still completely unacceptable for 6.9 million children to die annually of preventable causes. It must be a priority to accelerate this decline, and to further reduce the differences in child survival rates, taking account of the factors, including geography and poverty, that have impeded increased progress in this area.

The international community must spare no effort to end the preventable deaths of children. In this regard, we commend the Governments of Ethiopia, India and the United States for working with UNICEF to accelerate progress under the global initiative of Committing to Child Survival: A Promise renewed. My delegation is pleased to report that Guyana was among the 168 governments in 2012 that signed pledges to take action to end preventable child deaths.
Mr. President,

My country believes that every child has the right to an education. Education is the door through which children’s lives may be transformed by providing an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty that traps so many families.

We were therefore pleased to note that the number of out of school children of primary school age has dropped to an all-time low of 61 million and we commend UNICEF for its continued efforts to support access to education, through formal and informal learning environments around the world. In this respect, Guyana supports efforts to find innovative and flexible learning options to increase access to education for hard to reach and excluded children, including through the use of modern technology. Several initiatives are being pursued at the national level.

First the Guyana Learning Channel, launched in 2011, is a satellite communication network that facilitates the production and nationwide broadcast of educational programmes. The network is intended to reach all communities in Guyana, including remote hinterland communities.

Secondly, to improve the access to education, Government is pursuing the education for all, fast track initiative (EFA-FTI). This programme focuses on filling the gaps in the primary education system in the quest to meet the MDG which targets the access to a good quality education service by the year 2015.

A third initiative, the Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP), caters to differences among children in our efforts to reduce disparities among children related to poverty and/or the ability to access education. The competency based modularized programme is designed with strong emphasis being placed on what students can do in the workplace after completion of training. The SCCP also serves as an alternative pathway for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes to prepare students for further training and/or the world of work. The Government of Guyana believes that we must continue to provide both traditional and non-traditional methods of education for our children if they are to be encouraged to make the best use of their talents and interests.

We recognize UNICEF’s efforts at Gender mainstreaming which remained an important focus of UNICEF programming in 2012 and were pleased to note supporting girl’s education and gender equality remained a UNICEF priority.

Mr. President,

We were pleased to learn that UNICEF is continuing to integrate HIV programming across the organization with the goal of achieving an AIDS free generation. However, we are concerned that efforts to prevent HIV infections among adolescents have been less successful. One strategy which Guyana has adopted to address HIV and young people has been through our Education system as we have found that young people who fail to complete a basic education, are twice as likely to become infected with HIV. Education helps to overcome the conditions that facilitate the spread of HIV and can create the
understanding and tolerance that contribute to reduced stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

Mr. President,

UNICEF as an organization that has made many contributions to the safety and well-being of children has to be there for children in situations of humanitarian emergencies. We note from the report that UNICEF continues to work with governments, sister United Nations agencies and civil society partners in responding to a mounting number of natural disasters and complex humanitarian crises. We were also pleased to note that important progress has been made in responding to child protection needs and mainstreaming child protection into UN humanitarian action response plans and mechanisms.

We applaud such action and underscore the need for UNICEF to increase its efforts at addressing all humanitarian emergencies across the world where children are at risk. The impact on children should be the starting point. We encourage UNICEF to place attention on those countries where children are falling between the cracks in the multitude of emergencies. This must be the rallying point for raising additional resources.

Mr. President,

The Government of Guyana values its continued collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund. On February 15th, the Annual Work Plan for 2013 was signed. This plan which outlines priority areas under which the work will be undertaken during the year, including specific interventions in the areas of survival, development, protection and participation for the benefit for all children in Guyana. 2013 marks the second year of the current UNICEF/Government of Guyana country programme of cooperation for the period 2012-2016. Over the next four years, the Government of Guyana will work in partnership with UNICEF and will continue to focus on the implementation of evidence-based programmes of action which support the rights and development of children and women and continue to the achievements of the MDG’s in the areas of eliminating poverty and hunger, universal education, gender equality, maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS, with a key emphasis on equity.

Mr. President,

On the issue of the Medium Term Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2017 my delegation thanks Mr. Anthony Lake for his introduction to the Plan and we support the proposed strengthened focus on investing in health, education and protection of the most disadvantaged and excluded. We reserve our comments on the MTSP for that agenda item.

Mr. President,

In closing, my delegation takes this opportunity to reaffirm our support to the work of UNICEF and looks forward to contributing in a constructive way to advancing UNICEF’s important mission.

I thank you.