ANNUAL SESSION OF UNICEF’S EXECUTIVE BOARD

JUNE 2013

SPEECH FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

Mr BERNT AASEN

Check against delivery

Rough unofficial translation from Spanish original

Speech will be delivered in Spanish
Mr President and distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to present to you the country programme document for 2014-2018 agreed upon by UNICEF and the Cuban government.

The process began in 2011 with preparatory meetings. It was resumed in 2012, after the United Nations agencies decided to harmonize their programming cycles and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) until 2013, at the request and under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment.

Next, experts from national entities elaborated a Situation Analysis of the Rights of Children, Adolescents and Women (SitAn). The process was completed with bilateral and multilateral meetings, and sectorial and interdisciplinary workshops, which enabled national counterparts to make a causal analysis of the situation and to identify achievements and challenges in the implementation of development policies and programmes on the basis of the indicators for MDG targets, the results of the current cooperation cycle and the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan.

The Country Programme is aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework with the Government of Cuba for the period 2014-2018 which was signed on 7 June.

Based on the Cuban economic model, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework contributes to the priorities agreed with the national authorities, with a geographic, demographic and gender focus. Through this instrument, UNICEF and the other agencies and programs of the United Nations system will accompany Cuba in its development strategies focused on the human being and that seek the sustainable quality of life of its people.
Cuba is a middle income country with a Gross National Income of $5,460 USD per capita. In the human development index it is ranked in the fourth place within Latin America and the Caribbean.

Cuba submitted its third report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The report indicates that the country has already met a number of targets in relation to the second and third objectives, with a 99.7 per cent net primary school enrolment rate and a 90.3 per cent enrolment rate for secondary education, high gender parity indexes at all educational levels and continued advances in women’s participation in decision-making.

Moreover, according to 2012 data from WHO/UNICEF, Cuba has already completed objective seven in regards to water and sanitation, and it is on its way to complete objective four on infant mortality and six on HIV.

On 30 May, UNICEF presented the State of the World’s Children 2013 with special focus on children with disabilities. The attention to persons with disabilities is a social policy priority, which is aimed at raising the quality of life and creating equal opportunities for all children and adolescents. This focus will continue during the new cooperation programme.

The 2012 Report on South-South Cooperation in Latin America published by the Latin American General Secretariat, SEGIB, indicates that Cuba is the fifth country that provides horizontal cooperation in the region with a strong social profile. The cooperation executed in this area accounted for 77.4%, from which 37.7% was in the health sector and 32.1% in education.

Out of the many lesson learnt from the current period of cooperation, and with the hurricane season in the Caribbean is knocking at our doorsteps, I would like to highlight the educational actions focused on disaster risk reduction and prevention during emergencies and disasters. Cuba has suffered recurrences of
extreme natural phenomena, which have favoured the resurgence of local initiatives and have strengthened their response capacities.

The involvement of new government actors such as the Ministry of the Interior, of Culture and Science, of Technology and the Environment into the work of UNICEF has reinforced advocacy programmes, intersectional strategic partnerships and the use of spaces that offer facilities for assembly to broad sectors of the population. These partnerships make people aware of their rights and create an environment for the participation and protection of children and adolescents.

The previous cooperation cycle went from a life-cycle approach to one based with a focus on results-based programmatic interventions at the sectoral and multidisciplinary levels. These achievements will be maintained in the country programme 2014-2018,

In the new country programme that we present here today, UNICEF will continue to support the Government in protecting the rights and equal opportunities for development of children and adolescents.

To this end, programmes will be carried out to overcome shortcomings, using an equity-based approach and a culture of rights and participation as the main focuses of intervention and monitoring with respect to the situation of children, adolescents and women in Cuba.

UNICEF will facilitate South-South cooperation in sharing public policies, lessons learned, methodologies and knowledge about the rights of children and adolescents.

The cooperation programme is made up of four pragmatic components: health and nutrition, education, rights culture, protection and participation, and finally a cross-sectoral component.
The health and nutrition component will contribute to the Government’s efforts to maintain past achievements in the area of maternal, child and adolescent health and upgrade the quality of services.

The education component will focus on improving the quality of education for children and adolescents living in highly vulnerable conditions. In order to achieve this tightening the bonds between schools, families and communities, as well as teacher preparation and advanced training are required.

The rights culture, protection, and participation components, will allow UNICEF to help the country strengthen comprehensive protection and participation mechanisms, in more comprehensive and innovative ways through institutions and student and community organizations.

Finally, support will continue to be given to the building of national and local capacities for monitoring and evaluating the results of the programme, and enhancing the use of monitoring systems and the collection and analysis of data from participating institutions.

UNICEF is available to support the Cuban government to analyze and implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in on specific issues on which its assistance is requested.

The systematic use of factor analysis will help identify bottlenecks and prioritize problems in order to enhance the efficiency of programme management and the obtaining of equity-based results.

UNICEF would like to continue cooperating with the national authorities in order to produce results for children in Cuba and the rest of the region, and diminish the vulnerability when dealing with the risk of upcoming natural disasters and emergencies.
We are convinced that working alongside countries and supporting their own efforts towards strengthening their systems, politics, and programs that look to tend national concerns, is the only way to create sustainable solutions for all children and their families.

At the same time, our effectiveness and efficiency in the region will be enhanced through the South-South cooperation in sharing lessons learned, methodologies and knowledge, that contribute to the evening out of disparities between and within countries.