Statement
by
Austria

at the Annual Session of the
Executive Board of UNICEF

on agenda item 7

Draft common country programme document for Bhutan,
2014-2018

New York, 18 – 21 June 2013

Check against delivery
Distinguished Chair,

The Austrian delegation is grateful to UNICEF’s active contribution to the drafting of the present common country programme document for Bhutan and wishes to make the following comments on it.

The document presents a fair analysis and reflects lessons learned from extensive reviews and studies which involved consultations with all stakeholders, including Austria. It is aligned with the goals and indicators set out in Bhutan’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan and it is well timed as the Austrian Development Cooperation is in the process of developing the new country strategy for Bhutan.

The draft focuses on the comparative strengths of the UN Funds and Programmes which are present in Bhutan. It applies a human rights based approach which, given the socio-political realities it is facing, is of great relevance. The three mainstreaming categories of the human rights based approach address important areas, namely facilitating policy development to create an enabling environment for the progressive fulfilment of human rights, strengthening systems and services as well as the capacity of duty-bearers, promoting behavioural change and the empowerment of right holders.

UNICEF directly supports outcomes 2, 3 and 4 of the four outcomes of the document, which are well chosen and reflect the agency’s focus areas such as education, maternal and child health care, and advancement of rights and protection of women and children. UNICEF’s engagement in improving the living conditions of the many children who are living in monastic institutions has to be strongly supported.

UNICEF together with the UN Family in Bhutan has to be especially commended for its support to achieving gender equality and promoting participation of women and youth in decision making processes, both of which are areas where most relevant achievements were only possible with the strong support of the UN Agencies in Bhutan. In this regard, it will be important that both the country programme and particularly UNICEF will be provided with strong support, in order to safeguard what has been achieved so far and to promote further developments.
The Austrian Development Cooperation and UNICEF in Bhutan share some common areas such as enhancement of gender equality, support of civil society actors and access to justice. There has been a good flow of information between the United Nations and the Austrian office in Bhutan. This flow of information might be further improved, so as to allow both sides to more actively explore cooperation especially in these common areas.

Thank you, Chair