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

Agenda Items 8 + 9: Annual report on the evaluation function and major evaluations and Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

Mr President

I am delivering this statement on behalf of The Netherlands, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Germany, France, Israel, New Zealand and my own country Switzerland.

We acknowledge and welcome the quality and transparency of the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function and Major Evaluations. It provides valuable information for meaningful strategic discussions on UNICEF’s Evaluation Function and UNICEF’s work in general. It facilitates the internal learning process and enriches the dialogue between UNICEF and the Board Members. We appreciate that UNICEF is fostering an evaluation culture. The Report provides a wealth of information and analysis, which could be made even more accessible to a broader audience through a more visual and systematic presentation.

The Annual Report transparently summarizes the four major conclusions: a) declining number of evaluations; b) declining proportion of impact and summative evaluations; c) limited improvement of evaluation quality since mid-2000; and d) successful institution of a culture providing management responses routinely. It will be interesting to learn more about specific measures UNICEF will take in order to address the issues related to a) and b). Regarding the declining number of evaluations from 2010 to 2011 by 30 percent, as well as the issues encountered in poor quality evaluations, we would encourage UNICEF to explore the causes of these and identify adequate measures to address the causes.

On the use of evaluations, we would like to congratulate UNICEF/UNICEF Evaluation Function for successfully instituting a culture in which management responses to evaluations are routinely provided. It is also important that follow-up of recommendations of evaluations is monitored, and would like to hear your view on the role of VISION in this respect. We welcome the efforts made to strengthen internal evaluation staff capacity and would like to encourage UNICEF/UNICEF Evaluation Function to continue and even increase its commitment on knowledge management and interactive e-learning training activities. We fully support the Annual Report statement that increased funding from core resources is required to support the global evaluation agenda.
Mr President

Let me refer now to the **UNICEF’s Evaluation Policy**. We acknowledge and welcome the improvements initiated. In particular, we support the proposal to prepare a Global Evaluation Plan linked to the new Strategic Plan to be endorsed by the Executive Board. The annual evaluation report states that in 38 country offices, including several managing large programmes, no evaluations appear to have been conducted over the period 2009-2011, and that in many countries much needs to be done to institutionalize effective national evaluation systems. This is of concern to us, and we would welcome that the Evaluation Office ensures that it has an overview of planned and undertaken evaluations, in order to manage coverage.

In addition, we welcome the fact that Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) key mandates are taken into account in the revised policy by emphasizing for instance the importance of United Nations system-wide evaluations, joint evaluations, capacity building and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluations.

We further support UNICEF’s commitment to allocate a minimum of 1 percent of program expenses for evaluations which in comparison to previous practice represents a clear improvement. As mentioned during the discussion of the Strategic Plan, we expect that the resources for the evaluation functions are reflected transparently and independently from other functions in the integrated budget.

We recognize that with respect to the use of evaluations, the revised policy rightly emphasizes the importance of follow up actions and provides guidance on the utilization, dissemination and disclosure.

The policy would benefit from more specific information on whether and how the Evaluation Office will interact with Regional and/or Country Offices and provide evaluation support, capacity building, training and or guidance to them.

We would welcome if the policy would address how UNICEF is going to ensure both quantity and quality of its evaluations. We especially would like to ask UNICEF to do more evaluations of major humanitarian programs.

We urge UNICEF to target scarce evaluation resources where they are most needed for program learning and decision-making.

The policy mentions under point 51 that ‘evaluation should not be undertaken where
sufficient reliable and relevant evidence exists from other sources that could adequately inform policy and programming choices’. We support this, but underline that data should come from other independent sources, and that monitoring and research cannot replace evaluations.

We suggest that in implementing its policy, UNICEF pays special attention to evaluation quality assurance with a specific focus on quality improvement.

We recognize that with respect to the use of evaluations, the revised policy rightly emphasizes the importance of follow up actions and provides guidance on the utilization, dissemination and disclosure. We would like to emphasise what is common knowledge but yet is good to be reminded of: evaluation is a management tool, and if it is not used, it serves no purpose.

We welcome the proposal for a comprehensive and independent peer review by UNEG in 2015 on the functioning of the policy.

Thank you for your attention.