Thank you, [Mr. President]. [Mr. President], Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to introduce today the report of the Ethics Office activities during 2012. At the outset, I would like to inform you that while any shortcomings of the report are mine, the good work you will hopefully have noticed, are all thanks to my predecessor, Ms. Mary Roodkowsky and the hard working Ethics Office team that she has fostered. The efforts of my predecessor have laid a solid foundation that allows the Ethics Office to further develop strategies for promoting and fostering ethical culture.

Today, I will start with highlights of the Ethics Office results in 2012, then point out the lessons learned and way forward in these areas. This will be followed by what the office considers main challenges and the way forward to tackle these. Finally, I will touch upon the important role of partnerships.

In 2012, UNICEF updated several policies, such as on Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority as well as a cluster of policies related to prevention of Conflicts of Interest. These help the staff to live the values of the United Nations and comply with the Standard of Conduct for the International Civil Service. The Principle Adviser participated actively in the reviews and revisions of these policies. Although most of these were issued late in the year, it was immediately clear that they raised awareness among staff as evidenced by the jump in requests for advice.

Training was an important activity. A total of 1,473 staff members participated in training sessions on ethics focusing on UNICEF core values. Some of the workshops were conducted face-to-face, some were delivered over internet and some used a mixture of live on-site trainers and trainers over internet. Close to 30 per cent of participants in group-trainings were reached through webinars and video-conferences. An online training module, developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, was soft-launched in 2012. This online training is mandatory to all staff P5 and above as well as all Deputy Representatives, Chiefs of Operation and heads of field offices regardless of their level. Finally, in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources, training modules for use by individual offices were developed and tested in the field. These modules are flexible, allowing offices to single out one or more topics at a time for focused examination.

In March 2012, UNICEF launched the sixth cycle of the Financial Disclosure Programme. A total of 2,694 staff members were identified to file a disclosure. Compliance continued to be high at over 99 per cent. As in previous years, the interaction with staff on the disclosures has served to raise awareness with regards to conflicts of interest. For international professional staff, for instance, a conflict of interest, or potential conflict was identified for one in six filers. The majority of cases involve a
spouse or other relative working for UNICEF or another part of the UN or for a partner of UNICEF. A quarter of the cases are related to outside activities while a lesser proportion is linked to property and investment. The Ethics Office finds that the interaction has led to more complex and thoughtful queries from senior staff. Given its importance as a tool to identify conflicts of interest, we now call the programme Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme.

While the number of request for ethics advice decreased in 2012, the Ethics Office found that these requests are becoming more complex in nature requiring more detailed and nuanced responses. This very likely reflects the maturity of the Financial Disclosure Programme and the dialogue it has created on conflicts of interest as well as the training and awareness activities that have continued for several years.

The Ethics Office will continue its role as adviser on policies. Specifically in 2013, the Office will work with multiple divisions in UNICEF on Child Safeguard policy development. We will also collaborate with the Division of Human Resources as well as with Regional Offices on developing a cadre of Ethics Training facilitators. We are coordinating with the UN Secretariat Ethics Office on their development of a new online training course. And finally, we will embark for the first time in verification of three to five per cent of the financial disclosures.

Now I would like to turn to the main challenge identified and what we plan to do about it. In 2012, the Ethics Office received five requests for protection against retaliation. In addition, there were four requests for information on this policy, however, none of these inquiries led to formal complaints. Surveys of staff indicate that less than half of the staff members feel they would be protected against retaliation or other negative consequences. Some staff members also question the utility of reporting cases as indicated by the fact that just over half of staff members feel that appropriate action is taken by their offices towards people who do not comply with rules and regulations. We realize that this challenge is not unique to UNICEF, and that reversing this is not easy. However, the Ethics Office has recommended, and the management has accepted several organization-wide efforts. In the coming Strategic Plan, UNICEF is proposing a new Key Performance Indicator on ethics. The indicator focuses on strengthening the organizational culture and climate where staff members feel that it is safe and useful to speak up and challenge “how things are done here”. In order to muster the full force of the organization behind this effort, guidelines are developed for each office to include this KPI into their office management plan. The indicator will be monitored through periodic global staff surveys. The roll-out of this indicator is accompanied by training and dialogue with leaders and managers, equipping them with tools for ethical decision-making and helping them to exchange experiences on how to support staff who act ethically and who speak up. This year, for example, the Principal Adviser on Ethics has already facilitated discussions on the “whys” and “hows” of ethical leadership with two Regional Management Teams and with first-time Representatives.
The achievements last year would not have been possible without partnerships within the UN System and in-house in UNICEF. The same will be true in our efforts in 2013 to build upon these achievements and to take on new challenges.

The United Nations Ethics Committee, now the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, is a valuable venue through its formal meetings but also through more informal consultations in exploring best practices in addressing ethical issues and dilemmas. Our deliberations contribute to greater harmonization of both policies and practices system-wide.

Ethics is part of every aspect of UNICEF’s work. Thus, we work with all parts of the organization. The Division of Human Resources, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation, the Principal Legal Adviser, the Global Staff Association, the Division of Communication, the IT Support Services Division, the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes and the Executive Office are especially close allies in encouraging and enabling ethical decision-making and practices by staff members. But the office is increasingly engaging with Programme Division, Division of Policy and Strategies, Research and Evaluation arms of the organization as well as colleagues engaged with private sector.

This collaboration contributes to strengthening and maintaining an ethical climate and culture, supported by policies and systems that all together encourage and enable our staff to achieve results with integrity.

Thank you [Mr. President]