Thank you, Mr. President.

Italy wishes to commend your leadership during this year as President of the UNICEF Executive Board and to congratulate you and your team on the results achieved in the course of your term.

Allow me also to greet this Executive Board and to congratulate the Executive Director for her ongoing first year of tenure. We also wish to commend the work of the retiring Senior Staff and to welcome the new Deputy Executive Director of Partnerships, Ms. Petri Gornitzka.

Italy welcomes the concrete and forward-looking vision expressed by the Executive Director in her opening statement and we wish to make a few remarks in that respect.

This Second Regular Session comes at a crucial time of transition towards the new UN Development System: we support the proactive attitude of UNICEF’s Management and we encourage it to proceed in this direction of support, partnership and collaboration towards the full implementation of the new system. We are confident that this Executive Board will be able to agree on consistent and concrete decisions on this matter.

At the same time, we share the sense of urgency and concern over the mentioned situations in the field, where children and youth are the most affected. We strongly condemn the attacks on schools, hospitals and all the facilities in which children and youth are clearly and dramatically the targets, such as in the recent cases in Afghanistan and Yemen.

In the activities related to the development sector, Italy stands with UNICEF and the partners with growing engagement, presence and financial resources. From Syria to Lybia and Yemen, from Sub-Saharan Africa to Eastern Europe and Latin America, we are supporting health, education, nutrition, hygiene and child protection programs in order to
address multi-dimensional challenges and put children and young people at the center of development in every context.

On the Humanitarian side, Italy growingly supports and finances UNICEF Humanitarian Programs also through the Bilateral Emergency Fund - which allows flexibility and rapid response – and we look forward to the humanitarian update by the Director of the Emergency programs.

We welcome the particular focus of the Fund on innovation, which has traditionally been an asset for UNICEF and which is going to be even more central in the new development context.

We encourage a deeper development of UNICEF’s Research function, a key component of the current Strategic Plan, and a strengthening of the role that the UNICEF’s Office of Research – Innocenti, can and should play in order to address knowledge-based and data driven actions and find innovative solutions.

Mr. President, Italy this year further strengthened the strategic partnership with the Fund by achieving a record level in its financial, operational and programmatic engagement. In 2018, we further increased our core contribution to the Fund and confirmed our vision of UNICEF as a major development partner.

Finally, we are looking forward to seeing the Young People’s Agenda into action. We call on stronger horizontal engagement of this initiative, in order for it to be fully aligned with the upcoming UN Youth Strategy to be presented by the Secretary-General in the coming weeks.

As member of the Executive Board also for 2019, Italy is committed to keep supporting UNICEF in all its activities and to engage constructively to support the Fund in its efforts to actively contribute to the implementation of the reform of the United Nations Development System.

Thank you.