Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

1. Allow me to express the deep appreciation of the Royal Government to you, Mr. President, and to the members of the Executive Board’s Bureau for privileging Bhutan with this first EB Bureau field visit to the country, which took place earlier this year from 17-22 April. We regard it as a significant milestone in the history of UNICEF’s four and half decades of close, meaningful and sustained partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan.

2. From the feedback received from the various agencies of the Royal Government and other key stakeholders in Bhutan with whom Bureau members interacted, allow me to share that they were most encouraged and inspired in their efforts to advance our common commitment to foster positive changes in the lives of children, youth and women in the country.

3. The visit took place at an opportune time. As Bhutan stands at the threshold of graduation from the LDC category, the period 2018-2023 is critical to address the last mile challenges across all sectors of its economy. The Bureau visit provided an excellent opportunity for UNICEF’s governing body to examine and assess the impact of its country programmes on the ground and to identify priority areas to support Bhutan during this transitional phase. Such efforts will contribute to ensuring that Bhutan’s graduation is successful, smooth, and irreversible.

4. We reiterate the importance and continued need at this critical juncture, for strong UNICEF country level presence, bolstered by a robust country program document. Towards this end, my Government welcomes the adoption by the Board earlier this
week, of the UNICEF CPD 2019-2023 as contained in Doc no. E/ICEF/2018/P/L.17, which is closely aligned with Bhutan’s 12th Five Year Plan, and that of other UN agencies. UNICEF remains an important partner supporting our national efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in supporting the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and women in Bhutan

Mr. President,

5. The Royal Government of Bhutan attaches great value to the observations contained in the Bureau’s report on the visit, as reflected in Doc No. UNICEF/2018/EB/10. We acknowledge that challenges persist, which the Government remains resolutely determined to address. We appreciate in that regard, the Bureau’s recognition of strong country ownership of programmes and the Royal Government’s deep commitment and willingness to invest resources to programmes and projects that can have a positive impact and enrich the lives of our children, youth and women, in particular, those most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

I thank you again, Mr. President, and through you, the members of the Bureau, for supporting our efforts towards this end.

***