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Statement by

H.E. Ms. Mirsada ČOLAKOVIĆ, Ambassador, Permanent Representative
of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Check against delivery!
Thank you, Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank Madam Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director CEE/CIS, for the introduction of the UNICEF Country Program Document (CPD) for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2015 – 2019. I also would like to thank Mr. Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, for his statement.

We consider UNICEF as a reliable and important partner for the realization of children rights and welcome cooperation of the UNICEF team with our government institutions at all levels in the country. UNICEF active support encourages our institutions to address the major problems that children are facing today. We firmly believe that proposed Country Programme will additionally guide us toward a successful and consistent fulfilment of obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning among all the full implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

In this context we wish to emphasize that even if Bosnia and Herzegovina is an upper-middle-income country and a potential candidate for membership in the European Union, the genuine partnership with the UNICEF leads to addressing the major problems that children are facing today. Therefore, the UNICEF presence and support in my country are still needed and very much appreciated. Here, I wish to reiterate my country’s support for the Delivering as One approach with the aim to have a stronger, more coordinated and more efficient UNICEF and UN presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is to underline that the joint decision to adopt the Delivering as one approach was made in line with the QCPR recommendations.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches particular importance and awareness of the issue of children and as State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, we firmly believe that protection of rights of the child needs to be in continuation on the top on our strategic and development agenda, for the sake of our future. In this regard I wish to ad that we re-established Council for Children in 2013, formed by Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina which is now new tool for development, coordination and realization coherent agreements for implementation of Convention. In addition, we continue to cooperate with UNICEF and civil society networks in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Bosnia and Herzegovina recognizes UNICEF’s ability to closely cooperate with government and civil society all across the country, providing advocacy and technical assistance, promoting good governance and successfully participate in creating legal framework in field of child right protection.

Mr. President,

We welcome the UNICEF commitment to the foundational normative principles of the human rights-based approach to development, which is reflected in the CPD. The importance of human rights-based cross-sectoral approaches is also well recognized as one of the key lessons learned from the previous
programme. Such approach helps to promoting local ownership and strengthening collaboration between sectors.

We noted with satisfaction that the overall goal of the country programme is to support the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to accelerate the universal realization of child rights by fostering greater social inclusion, especially of the most vulnerable and excluded children and families: children with disabilities, children of minorities, especially Roma, and children in impoverished communities. We would like to include children victims of all forms of violence and exploitation, victims of divisions and disasters.

This is to be done by reducing disparities and inequities and strengthening social cohesion among groups. The programme additionally helps in our efforts to implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as achievement of the post-2015 development agenda. With UNICEF support, social protection and inclusion systems have been strengthened and 23 per cent of the country's municipalities have established special services for the most vulnerable children and families. However, challenges still persist.

Mr. President,

It is well recognized and highlighted by UNICEF that Bosnia and Herzegovina is vulnerable to natural disasters - such as floods, landslides, extreme temperatures, earthquakes. I would like to express our gratitude to the UNICEF and its Country Team for the supportive role during the unprecedented flood and landslides emergency that affected my country in May this year. UNICEF worked on providing essential services for children and families affected by the disaster.

One of the most critical issues is the fact that social exclusion and at risk of poverty is expected to increase after the natural disaster, which is going to have a long-term effect, especially in rural areas affected by the floods. The situation is particularly difficult for vulnerable families and children. Therefore the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina at all levels have started developing new measures needed to address the risk of floods and other natural disasters, including mitigation measures. I would like to add that we appreciate the flexibility adopted in the drafting of the CPD 2015-2019 in this regard.

Mr. President,

Each post-conflict society usually suffers deep divisions centered on different perceptions and interpretations of the past. This is the reason I would like to stress that national reconciliation and trust are considered additional basic prerequisites for building a functional state and society. Consequently, our children are champions for our future. In this regard I would like to underline that in a case of
Bosnia and Herzegovina, even 20 years after conclusion of conflict the reconciliation process is still ongoing. Our experience is that reconciliation is a long lasting process that requires genuine and permanent partners at local, national and international level. This is the reason we welcome UNICEF intention to facilitate a national dialogue on child-friendly social norms, including through communication for social change to generate positive changes in behaviours and attitudes though this program. In addition, strengthening the monitoring system will have benefit for full exercise of children’s rights.

In view of the fact that education is essential tool to the advancement of societies, I would like to remind you that we identified education and culture as critical areas which can act as a springboard for dialogue and reconciliation to take a deeper root in the country. Based on this initiative, a joint UN Country Team (UNDP, UNICEF & UNESCO) project has been developed – called “Dialogue for the Future”.

In recent period Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved and adopted numerous of laws considering protection of children, including laws in field of crime legislative, family abuse prevention and also made progression by promoting and implying projects which are first step and guidance for creating stable system of protection of children with disabilities and special needs care. We also very closely follow the matter of the issuance of the Identity number (Unique Master Citizen Number) for the newborn children which deserves permanent solution. In addition, the Action Plan for Children of Bosnia and Herzegovina contains Strategy of improvement for children without adult guidance, in order to create favourable conditions for the life of children, healthy growth, social inclusion, education and all in the best interests of children.

However, Mr. President, allow me to remind you by following remarks: it is almost 20 years that Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the peace agreement, and we still carry the legacy of the conflict that befell my country. This legacy in some aspects and in some cases has been left to the children. As UNICEF also noted, we still have “two schools under one roof” which are our reality. In 2003 there were 56 such schools, in 2012 this number reduced to 34.

Finally, Mr. President, the survival, protection and development of children are universal imperatives that are integral to human progress. We are ready to continue the fruitful partnership with the UNICEF at all levels of governance in line with the mandates of relevant institutions with the focus on multisectoral coordination. We continue to work more closely on our common commitment to ensuring protection for our children.

I thank you for your attention.