UNICEF Executive Board second regular session 9-12 September 2014, New York

Agenda item 5 Proposals for UNICEF programme cooperation (Guatemala)

President,

I will deliver this statement on behalf of Sweden and my own country Norway.

We thank UNICEF for the submission of the draft Country Programme Document for Guatemala, and we welcome the efforts made in preparing and updating it. We also appreciate the inclusive process at country level for submitting comments.

Before commenting on the CPD for Guatemala, let me take this opportunity to raise a general remark with regards to the procedure for elaboration of CPDs. We feel that when preparing a country programme, components like risk assessment, results monitoring and mainstreaming of cross cutting issues are crucial for the programme’s effective operationalization. However, they are only briefly touched upon in the CPDs we have studied and we find it difficult to see where in the elaboration process these components are considered and can be discussed with UNICEF. We would appreciate to hear UNICEF’s view and clarification on this.

President, we now wish to make the following brief remarks on the Country Programme Document for Guatemala before us.

The program rationale clearly describes the need for a continued and strong UNICEF cooperation in Guatemala. Still, nearly 25 years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child, too many children are suffering from poverty, malnutrition, violence, social exclusion and lack of education. Although progress is being made, significant challenges persist and need to be solved to secure children’s rights, welfare and potential in Guatemala.
Two decades after the peace accords, children of indigenous origin are sadly among the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups. Many of them are living in areas threatened by natural disasters, as well as in rural communities with frequent social tension and unrest. It is important that indigenous children’s rights and lives be at forefront of UNICEF’s work in Guatemala. It is important that UNICEF monitor and document the difficult situation of indigenous children – and systematically address its underlying causes.

Sweden and Norway appreciate UNICEF’s work and engagement in Guatemala. Sweden continues to support the activities within the focus area of Child Protection, whereas Norway supports UNICEF’s Mayan Joint Programme on bilingual and intercultural education. Lack of education is one of the greatest barriers to development. More indigenous children need to complete basic education and continue to secondary and higher education. Language barriers is a challenge for many children. The Mayan Joint Programme has resulted in standards and models for bilingual education, including the necessary participation of children’s parents – and mothers in particular - in children’s education. In UNICEF’s cooperation with the Ministry of Education, it is important to use these lessons learned, not only to ensure the quantity but the quality of bilingual education.

President,
The country programme 2015-2019 has been aligned with the government’s priorities, pacts and plan. Guatemala is soon entering a year of elections. In order to secure broad and long-term national support for the new five-year strategy, it is important that UNICEF continue building strong partnerships with public and private sector, civil society and other international cooperation agencies. We also encourage enhanced efforts for well-functioning coordination as this is crucial for effective programme implementation.

Thank you.