OPENING STATEMENT

BY

THE

PRESIDENT
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DURING

THE

UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD
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Please check against delivery
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the three months since we last met, much has changed in the world. For us, if we are lucky, summer has been a time of rest and relaxation. Yet, I know that for many of us, that has indeed not been the case, and that this summer has brought many of the old issues back to the floor such as issues of instability and illness. We have seen the sad faces of children, who have once again become innocent victims of forces beyond their control or understanding. Children have continued to face various challenges in situations of conflict and chaos in places such as South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, the Central African Republic, the Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, and the list goes on.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Excellencies,

In West Africa, where the Ebola epidemic rages on, we have seen children helplessly bear the brunt of the tragedy of this plague. Ebola continues to spread, among doctors and other health workers, among community leaders, and across the general population, in countries where health resources are strained and were already strained before the outbreak of the current crisis. We reach out in solidarity to our fellow human beings who are caught up in this crisis in these countries and we wish them all the very best in their struggle to contain the situation and rise above this horrible plague that has befallen their nations. But the real reason why the Ebola outbreak has reached its present proportions with the potential of getting even worse remains varied and mysterious. These reasons we know are essentially rooted in the poor capacities that remain in those countries, for managing diseases, for preventing diseases, for responding to diseases, for diagnosing these diseases and for treating these diseases. This continues to remain a stark reminder to all of us that the long-term funding for strengthening health systems right across the developing world remains a challenge for the entire international community as well as for our organization: UNICEF. Today we have witnessed history’s worst outbreak of this Ebola disease, even though it has been with us since 1976.
It is therefore, an imperative of health and social justice for the international community to respond to the current Ebola crisis in a manner that would save lives immediately, stem the suffering of children and their families and promise a better future for these countries that are now caught up in this crisis and ensure that this does not become a global crisis for all of us. I believe that UNICEF must be the first among the global organizations to be there to do what it needs to do to protect the lives of children and show the way in dealing with this crisis.

The news this past summer could lead us to despair about the prospects for the world's children, or even for humanity itself. This morning, however, I choose to focus on hope, for our future, and for our children's futures. This is because we are here at the UNICEF Executive Board, and as we have seen since the dark days of the Second World War and many other wars that have plagued us and in the interim period, since this organization was founded, wherever and whenever UNICEF works for children, there is always hope. There is always hope!

In a few moments, the Executive Director will speak to us about UNICEF’s outstanding work these past months in support of children affected by humanitarian emergencies, but also how UNICEF continues to remain one of the most steadfast institutions for building the backbone of child survival, development, protection and healthcare systems around the world. I know you join me commending the Executive Director and his team and the entire UNICEF staff who work under extremely difficult circumstances in danger zones for their tireless work in support of children everywhere.

Where children are in need, UNICEF is indeed there!

• I begin of course by giving and recognizing the great work that continues to come out of the Supply Division. The Supply Division in Copenhagen has sent record amounts of medical supplies to West Africa to fight the Ebola outbreak and the country team staff in Sierra Leone and Liberia have ramped up their efforts to deliver those supplies to populations wherever they are in need. We know that,
that Unit, that Division, continues to remain seized of the challenges that are faced elsewhere.

- Likewise in Iraq and Syria, where UNICEF has delivered humanitarian supplies to families fleeing conflict, or in Gaza, where UNICEF is already working to help children resume their education after such a terrible and devastating conflict. In South Sudan, in Somalia, in Ukraine, everywhere I look, I see the hand of UNICEF.

- In the Central African Republic UNICEF and partners have distributed more than half a million mosquito nets to protect families in Bangui from malaria. As we know, malaria remains the number one killer of under five children in that country.

But we also know that UNICEF is a network of units, departments, country offices, regional offices, etc. The Supply Division which has done sterling work would not be able to deliver on its great work, were it not for the entire organization’s coordinated and systematic response that has become the brand of UNICEF around the world. As President of this Board, I give kudos and great recognition to the entire organization for its sterling work.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies,**

An important reason to speak of hope, as I said earlier, is the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC is the most widely ratified international human rights instrument in history. It has changed the way children are viewed, it has changed the way in which societies respond to children, it has changed the way in which families and parents respond to children, and it has changed the way in which Governments engage around the issues of children. Because of this Convention, children are treated as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of a passive object of care and charity from others. In every region of the world, the Convention has inspired changes in laws and practice that have improved the lives of millions of children, and UNICEF has been and continues to be a leader in the fight for children’s rights, in the field but also in the realm of policy, data, research,
evaluation and the focus on equity. This is to ensure that the rights of all children are respected. As we celebrate this important anniversary later this year, on the 20th of November and all that has been achieved through this great organization and through this great Convention, we also acknowledge that much more remains to be done, and that UNICEF will be a leader and must remain a leader in those efforts moving forward.

Another reason to be hopeful is the clear recognition that child protection, survival and development must be at the centre of sustainable development. You have all now witnessed the effort of the Open Working Group that took place over the last 18 months. Children have found their rightful place among the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. This was no coincidence. This was a determined effort of the Open Working Group to recognize that the children are at the centre of all our efforts of development, because if we do not get the effort for children right, we will never get the effort for development right. Children must benefit from the social and economic development that will flow from our actions under the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It will be up to each Member State and with the support of UNICEF to ensure that this issue, this concern, this imperative, is not lost sight of.

As we proceed now to the challenge of formulating and implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which will start in a few weeks, all Member States particularly those represented at this Board, must champion the issue of children always.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

Our work at this session is important for the future direction of UNICEF, particularly the agenda items that are related to finance and resources. Particularly, also important is the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. UNICEF will not be able to achieve the results of the Strategic Plan without an adequate funding base, particularly, as I have said time and again at this Board, particularly, for core resources. The updated financial estimates for the Strategic Plan make this absolutely clear. In discussing the report on private fundraising, we will address the vital and growing role of the private sector in contributing to
UNICEF. It is my hope that this particular effort will send a strong message to other organizations within the United Nations to recognize that partnerships beyond the traditional partnerships continue to form a core and important part of the international effort to respond to the development challenges that we all face.

In the context of ever-growing humanitarian and emergency operations, we will review at this Board, two pertinent evaluations on the UNICEF cluster lead agency role in humanitarian action and on UNICEF programmes to protect children in emergencies. One further thematic evaluation will be discussed, namely a synthesis report of UNICEF nutrition programmes that has been ongoing over the last few months and years. Ending all forms of malnutrition is key to ending stunting and under development of children. This must be the key focus of our nutrition-related responses. We must address the nutritional needs of all children in the world if they are to fully develop physically and emotionally as well as intellectually. Meeting these nutritional needs should be prioritized in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

We look forward to a stimulating dialogue with the secretariat on these evaluation reports and their management responses.

Finally, we have before us a number of country programme documents (CPDs). We always say that country programmes are the very heart of UNICEF’s work and indeed they are and we expect that these reports make that abundantly clear. The four new CPDs, which will be introduced and adopted at this session, are the programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay. Similarly, the reports of Executive Board field visits to Burkina Faso and Sudan will highlight in different contexts, Africa’s challenges, successes and opportunities for investment in Africa’s children. The report of the joint field visit to Panama and El Salvador is an important opportunity to examine the challenges facing middle-income countries in Latin America.
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
As this brief review of the agenda will have shown, we have several important issues to discuss in the coming days. We may also want to use this time to reflect on what we have achieved this year, and how the Executive Board, going forward, can continue to improve its ways of doing business and contributing to the continued success of UNICEF.

This Board, as I have said many a times, remains an exemplary governance instrument of the United Nations organization. We as Board Members and I particularly as the President of this Board, remain very proud of what we as a Board have continued to do, our organization continues to exemplify both here in New York and the world over.

I thank you for your attention.