Mr. President, Mr. Executive Director, distinguished delegates,

At the outset allow me to sincerely thank the UNICEF staff in the field for their tireless dedication and efforts, often carried out in very difficult and dangerous environments. Year 2013 recorded the greatest number of casualties among UN humanitarian workers. We must demand protection for the people, who have devoted their lives to help others and to work in humanitarian relief operations.

On a more positive note I would like to thank the President Ambassador Macharia Kamau and the Executive Director Tony Lake for their leadership and opening statements to the Executive Board this morning.

Mr. President,

Estonia highly appreciates UNICEF’s valuable contribution to the collective humanitarian response. We welcome UNICEF’s efforts to close the gap between the demands of crises and the organization’s ability to respond through the Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative and also through recent structural changes in the headquarters. Estonia encourages UNICEF to ensure that its humanitarian work receives necessary resources form the organization’s regular budget and urge UNICEF to improve reporting on it. We also encourage UNICEF further strengthen and develop partnerships on the ground. In this connection I have to mention that Estonia has during the last year supported UNICEF’s humanitarian work in South Sudan, Central African Republic, Gaza, Syria and Somalia, especially to provide quality education to children in humanitarian crises.

Mr. President,

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A lot of progress has been made, but there are still challenges. According to a recent UNICEF report violence against children is universal and so prevalent that it is often unseen and accepted as the norm. Violations of children’s rights are especially common in humanitarian situations. Therefore we encourage UNICEF to particularly increase its advocacy in humanitarian contexts. Estonia
welcomes that UNICEF is taking action to improve protection of children in emergencies, such as further develop inter-agency human rights-based advocacy, address impunity and increase use of data.

We are especially concerned about the grave violations against children in armed conflicts as we just yesterday discussed in the Security Council. We must take all measures to prevent violations against children as well as to make violators accountable. We call on all States who have not yet done so to sign the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Estonia welcomes the positive progress made with the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign.

Mr. President,

Many humanitarian crises are also caused by natural disasters. In a few weeks the United Nations Climate Summit 2014 will take place here in New York. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to emphasize the seriousness of the challenges children face from climate change. Climate change has already caused the displacement of millions of people, depriving them of their homes and livelihood and creating unsafe living conditions for children. World Health Organization estimates that more than one-third of the global disease burden among children is due to modifiable environmental factors.

Mr. President,

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to commend UNICEF for the remarkable performance by UNICEF fundraisers and the continued organizational focus on pledge, resulting in an increase of over 14 per cent in the number of UNICEF pledge donors from 2012. I welcome that UNICEF is actively developing innovative ways to fundraise for resources. I would also like to commend UNICEF for their new online open platform designed to increase the transparency in accordance with the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative.

Estonia remains a strong supporter of UNICEF. Estonian government has contributed to UNICEF’s funds for 16 years already and is committed to continue to do so with progressive way in our core and thematic support

Thank you!