Mr. Chair,

My delegation would like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for presenting annual reports on the achievements, challenges and the way forward relating to the protection and promotion of the rights of children. Our special thanks also go to the special procedure mandate holders and the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. Chair,

The target date for the Millennium Development Goals is fast approaching. With only about 800 days remaining it is high time the international community redoubled its efforts to achieve the MDGs, especially those relating to the protection and promotion of children’s rights. All stakeholders, including Member States, civil society, NGOs, business and academia, should collaborate closely to create productive synergies. The Convention on the Rights of the Child will continue to serve as a foundational legal framework to galvanize and guide efforts toward ‘A World Fit for Children.’

Children are the most important of these stakeholders and the main actors of the future. Therefore, the Post-2015 Development Agenda should encompass the protection and promotion of the rights of children as one of its central goals.

Mr. Chair,

In this regard, my delegation would like to make the following comments:

First, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children should be given priority in our efforts to protect and promote the rights of children. Children with disabilities, indigenous children, those in remote rural areas and especially those in conflict
zones suffer the most, and are the most vulnerable to poverty and marginalization. Financial, food and energy crises and the ever-increasing negative impacts of climate change have exacerbated their exclusion and exploitation.

In light of these realities, it is very significant that UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2014-2017, which was adopted last September at the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board, has a substantive and explicit equity focus aimed to address the rights of the most disadvantaged and excluded. The Government of the Republic of Korea commends UNICEF’s vision and efforts to reach these groups and sincerely hopes its work will enhance social inclusion.

Second, the international community should engage more actively to free every child from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. Numerous girls are still suffering from female genital mutilation, child marriages, as well as sexual violence. Children, especially girls, are the main targets of human trafficking. The needs of children in armed conflict require special attention as well.

Third, we must prioritize education for children in all our development activities. Education is essential to overcoming poverty, an invaluable tool for empowerment and a driver of economic growth. The Republic of Korea is an example of how investment in education can end the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

In the early 1960s, the GDP per capita of the Republic of Korea was no more than 100 USD. Since then, the Republic of Korea has evolved into an economic power despite the absence of domestic natural resources. Our success story is in large part a product of generations of investment in education and the development of human capital. We wish to share the lessons learned from our experience; lessons that include shortcomings as well as good practices in our education policies and initiatives.

Mr. Chair,

The Republic of Korea will continue to strive for the realization of the rights of each and every child. Let us move towards ‘A World Fit for Children,’ a world that enables every child to develop to his or her full potential.

Thank you.