UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

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STATEMENT BY FIONA RITCHIE,
FIRST SECRETARY,
IN RESPONSE TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNICEF

8 September 2015

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Thank you Mr President, Mr Executive Director for your statements.

I’d like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss three areas: First, the agreement on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development and its implications for the work of UNICEF; second, the urgent humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen and the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit; and third, the structured dialogue on financing UNICEF’s strategic plan which will take place later today.

Mr Executive Director, this meeting of the UNICEF Executive Board comes at a very exciting time. Last month we celebrated the finalisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in a few short weeks the UN membership will officially adopt them. Today is an opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of UNICEF and other colleagues who helped secure this historic agreement.

UNICEF will play a crucial role in implementing this bold and ambitious new development agenda. We firmly believe that children must be at the core of our global efforts, and that sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children. Along with the other agencies, UNICEF must ensure that its approach to implementing the new agenda is “fit for purpose” to address the challenges faced. We encourage the agency to continue its commitment to UN coherence, to delivering effective, efficient, and timely humanitarian support, and to realising a world where no-one is left behind and where the rights of all children are secure.

Mr President, Mr Executive Director,

The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to its partnership with UNICEF, particularly in challenging humanitarian settings such as Syria and Yemen. Protection of civilians remains a paramount concern in Syria. The protection sector has received under 10% of funding sought, and reached only 227,000 out of a target of 5.3 million people. We encourage UNICEF to expand the coverage of child protection, risk education and psychosocial support
activities in Syria, and we look forward to the findings of the child protection assessment. The humanitarian situation in Yemen is now one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with more than 80% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. Despite this, it is one of the most underfunded crises, with the UN appeal for Yemen only 20% funded. We look to UNICEF to help raise the profile of the humanitarian crisis, so that together we may encourage more donors to step up.

The UK believes that the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit provides a great opportunity to significantly improve the lives and dignity of poor people around the world who are increasingly affected by man-made and natural disasters. At a time of unprecedented humanitarian suffering we must work together more effectively to tackle some of the world’s most complex challenges: providing much better assistance in protracted and conflict-affected crises and improving resilience to natural disasters. We also need to deliver transformative change for women, children and young people who are most severely affected by crises. UNICEF can and must play an important role in the summit to ensure that children remain at the centre of the international community’s discussions and efforts.

Mr Executive Director,

In order to achieve results on these important issues and other areas of work within the strategic plan, UNICEF needs adequate levels of both core and non-core funding that are predictable, flexible, and aligned with its mandate. We fully support your continued efforts to strive for transparency, to diversify UNICEF’s funding base, and to work with governments and other public and private partners to mobilize additional resources to benefit children beyond those channelled through the agency. We’re looking forward to engaging in the structured dialogues on financing called for in the QCPR, and we hope that these discussions will help to improve our understanding of UNICEF’s current and expected financial situation as well as its strategy for delivery as we approach the mid-term review of the strategic plan and integrated budget.
Let me conclude by thanking you for the important work that UNICEF has done over the past year. I encourage you to continue your efforts, and to look forward to the mid-term review as an opportunity to increase your level of ambition and strive for even better outcomes for children around the world.

Thank you.