Statement to the UNICEF Executive Board
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September 2015
Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to address you today to submit, eight Country Programme Documents (CPDs) for the period 2016 to 2020 related to:

Belarus (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.13),
Georgia (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.14),
Kazakhstan (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.15),
Serbia and Kosovo under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)) (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.16 and (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.16/Add 1),
Tajikistan (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.17),
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.18),
Turkey (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.19) and
Uzbekistan (E/ICEF/2015/P/L.20).

I am pleased to report that these CPDs were developed in close collaboration with national authorities and stakeholders. I also note that the few comments received by the July deadline after the documents were shared on the Executive Board website, have been promptly addressed, in consultation with host country governments. I wish to express my warm thanks to Member States for their constructive comments during the review period.

As time will not allow to present in detail each CPD, I will highlight how the programmes of cooperation will contribute, in a contextualized and relevant manner, to a few well-defined and equity-focused common priority results for children in the Region. Let me first highlight key strategies.

Over the next five years, in the eight countries, UNICEF will focus on closing equity gaps, promoting gender equality and focusing on marginalized and excluded groups, including children with disabilities.

Across all programme components, support to strengthening national capacities to monitor the progressive realization of children’s rights will help us track the long-term sustainability of the results for children. UNICEF will work with a wide range of actors to strengthen
independent child rights monitoring mechanisms and institutions, and - especially in Upper Middle Income Countries - leverage national resources for child health, education and protection.

The Country Programmes will support governments to improve the quality, analysis and use of disaggregated data on children, and to assess the impact of social programmes on the wellbeing of vulnerable children.

It is also important to note that all CPDs were developed to contribute to the implementation of the UNDAFs, and to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. President,

The eight country programmes of cooperation were carefully designed with host country governments and partners to identify, from the UNICEF Strategic Plan the most relevant, specific and tangible results for children.

First, all 8 CPDs will accelerate the realization of the right of all children to live in a caring and supportive family environment, by preventing the separation of children from their families in the first place, and ensuring that children who are in residential institutions are reunited with their biological families or placed in alternative family care. In order to enable families to better support their children, UNICEF will engage with the social protection systems to reprioritize and improve the social efficiency of public expenditure towards supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable families, and will facilitate the adaptation, modelling and scaling-up of child-sensitive cash transfers, including child benefits.

Second, all country programmes of cooperation will support governments to expand early childhood development services to improve parents’ ability to care for their children’s holistic growth. This has proved effective to also prevent violence, abuse and neglect against children, to reduce
separation of children from their families, and to enable early assessment and rehabilitation of disabilities.

Based on recent successes and lessons learned from models in several countries, UNICEF will collaborate with ministries of health to introduce, strengthen and systematically implement home visiting services for families with young children.

A third area where the eight countries are pursuing accelerated results over the next five years is greater inclusion of marginalized children in inclusive early learning and/or quality education. Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan will pursue both. Georgia and Kazakhstan will focus on ECE; Belarus and Turkey on inclusive quality education.

UNICEF will work with education systems to be fully inclusive, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory. This will lead to increased access to quality preschools and schools, and to better prevention and response to dropout, as well as to improved quality of education and learning outcomes.

The Country Programmes will foster positive changes in attitudes in preschools and schools, and aim to reduce the acceptance of child abandonment because of disability. This will require a shift from the medical model to a psychosocial model of assessing disabilities.

The CPDs also share a renewed effort in a fourth priority area: increased access by children to a child friendly justice system, so that civil and administrative procedures are implemented in their best interests. This, especially in four CPDs (Georgia; Kazakhstan; Serbia; Uzbekistan), is to be achieved through more comprehensive data system on the administration of justice for children, better internal quality control mechanisms to prioritise child-friendly decisions, and the specialization of justice professionals to deal with children according to the latest international standards.
Fifth, the CPDs will overcome bottlenecks that exist in most countries in the region regarding adolescents’ participation in society: social norms do not yet provide adolescents, especially from ethnic minorities and adolescent girls, with adequate access to health and education services. The new programmes of cooperation, particularly in four CPDs (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey) will nurture the potential of adolescents, providing space for them to contribute to inclusive, tolerant and peaceful societies, and giving children ‘second chance’ in the second decade of their lives.

In Turkey, the country programme will respond to the call by the Government to scale up UNICEF contributions to education and protection for children under temporary protection in the country, both in camps and in host communities.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I am very confident that the eight new country programmes in front of you demonstrate the evolving UNICEF partnerships with governments in the Region, with sharper national dialogue on child-friendly social norms; promoting a truly inclusive approach to social services, fostering tolerance and respect for multiculturalism and diversity; enhanced systems to monitor child rights; and stronger capacities for effective, inclusive and innovative services, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged regions.

UNICEF will play a greater role as an independent voice for children and adolescents, promoting their best interests, leveraging resources for children from the public and private sectors, facilitating costing, assessment and scaling up of policy models and programmes, and offering top-of-the-line technical advice and expertise. In so doing, UNICEF will broaden the base for horizontal co-operation and knowledge exchange among countries in the region and beyond.
Thank you, Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, for your kind attention.

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