Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

It is my pleasure to present to you the Country Programme Document for Algeria, covering the period 2016-20.

As this is my first time addressing the Board in this capacity, I would like to take a few minutes to also update you on some key recent developments in the region.

This year has seen a further, significant deterioration in the situation of children in MENA. Today, we have three distinct “Level 3” emergencies: Syria (and the five major refugee-hosting countries of Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey); Iraq; and, most recently, Yemen.

The escalation of the conflict in Yemen since March 2016, has resulted in 21 million people in need of humanitarian assistance including 10 million children. The lack of fuel and electricity leads to daily blackouts and reduces the availability of water, health care and other vital services across the country. The prevalence of acute malnutrition is steadily rising. Almost 2 million girls and boys have been unable to go to school because of the conflict.

At the same time, the crisis in Syria rages on, with 12 million people affected inside the country, including 3.5 million children displaced internally.
Four million Syrians, including two million children, have been forced to flee as refugees to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt. These countries deserve the gratitude of the international community for their efforts in welcoming and hosting these refugees. With over 2.7 million Syrian children out of school within and outside Syria, frequent and often deliberate water cuts in major population centres, near collapse of many basic social services, persistent and large scale grave violations committed against children, and the fact that refugees are increasingly having to resort to negative coping mechanisms, the need for UNICEF to continue to scale up our operations remains high.

In Iraq, more than 8 million people, with around half being children, are in need of assistance. Access to health, water and education services is severely restricted across much of the country, due to the ongoing conflict involving various non-state armed groups, military and other forces.

On an almost daily basis, we are now seeing one of the consequences of these unresolved and protracted political and military crises – the sharp rise in refugee flows to Europe of desperate people fleeing Syria and Iraq, often transiting in other crisis-affected countries such as Libya, before embarking on their dangerous trips across the Mediterranean. When we ask refugees why they have left their countries- one of the reasons that they commonly site is for the future of their children. Last week, we released a report called “Education under
Fire’ to highlight these issues - the report shows that around 13 million children are out of school because of the various conflicts in the region.

In this very challenging context, in addition to scaling-up our immediate life-saving programmes in water, nutrition and health, one of the most important international efforts to date has been the “No Lost Generation” initiative. Since its launch almost two years ago, the NLG has mobilized over a dozen partners from the UN, donor and programme governments, and NGOs to advocate for and invest in the education, protection and future of a generation of Syrian children and adolescents scarred by war. We are now working with partners to review and scale up this initiative, aiming to reduce the number of out of school children and protect children and young people from resorting to child labour, early marriage or recruitment into military and para-military forces, as well as engaging young people more systematically as part of the solution.

Mr. President, let me turn now to Algeria, a country in this volatile region, that is making solid progress for children and which has been a leader in the G77 contributions to the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Thanks to decades of significant government investment in health, education and social welfare services, Algeria has achieved all the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals, with the sole exception of the reduction of maternal mortality. And even the MMR did decline very significantly – from 216 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 66 today.
Under 5 mortality has also dropped sharply, vaccination coverage rates have consistently been above 90%, while enrollment in primary and secondary education has increased to close to 100% – for both girls and boys. The country has invested considerably in a system of subsidies and pro-poor social transfers.

Mr. President, the Board is well aware of the Monitoring Results for Equity approach (MoRES) from previous sessions on this topic. In fact, one of the most important lessons from the current country programme in Algeria has been the value-added of a bottleneck and barrier analysis in helping experts from the Ministry of Health to zero in on the key challenges in addressing maternal mortality, in order to assist in prioritizing actions. The analysis led to: the development of the first-ever national plan to accelerate maternal mortality reduction; the adoption of a decree requiring maternal deaths to be registered by location, thereby facilitating analysis of the causes; and, the establishment of a formal maternal mortality audit system. In fact, the application of MoRES has proven so useful that the Ministry is now planning to use the same approach to help reduce neonatal mortality.

Another major success from the current programme relates to justice for children. Algeria is one of the few countries in the region that has developed a specific training package around Juvenile Justice for its judges prior to their deployment to the field. Each judge must undergo around 30 hours of training on justice for children as part of their overall training; around 1,200 judges have
so far completed the training, which has become a critical component of the CP system in a country where approximately 16,000 children come into contact with the law each year.

The new Country Programme aims to build on this very solid progress. To do this, UNICEF will use a mix of strategies including most importantly: capacity building of public sector institutions to deliver higher quality social services; evidence generation and targeted advocacy to inform policy and programme reforms; and south-south cooperation to identify, and adapt the best global experiences to the Algerian context.

Specifically, in terms of planned results, in the areas of child survival and early child development, UNICEF and partners will focus on scaling-up interventions to reduce neo-natal mortality (which now accounts for 70% of infant mortality) and increasing access to integrated ECD services for children aged 3-5 years. Specifically, UNICEF will provide support to the implementation of the first-ever integrated strategy for early childhood development, setting up tailored models for preschool care at decentralized level for later replication.

In the area of education, the programme will support national efforts to get all children into school and reduce incidence of school dropout so that as many children as possible remain in school at least until the age of 16 years. This will involve promotion of ‘catch up’ classes, and vocational and technical training.
In child protection, UNICEF will support the Algerian authorities in their ongoing effort to strengthen the legal and policy framework to ensure greater reach and effectiveness of protection services. It will also strengthen data and coordination systems for child protection, alternatives to detention such as mediation, while introducing a referral system for providing a structured and systematic response to violence against children.

Lastly, in the area of social inclusion, UNICEF and partners will provide technical expertise to review the effectiveness of the existing social protection system, to ensure the greatest impact on the most disadvantaged and poorest children.

Throughout all sectors and programmes, UNICEF and partners will maintain a focus on equity, to ensure the most disadvantaged child in Algeria is also benefitting from the country’s progress and is not marginalized or excluded.

Mr. President, please allow me to conclude on this note - we believe that the Country Programme designed jointly by the Government of Algeria and UNICEF represents a solid basis on which to, not only continue, but also – to deepen -- our collaboration to achieve the realization of the rights of all children in Algeria. I look forward to your comments.