Mister President,

On behalf of the delegation, it is my honor to present the report of the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to Amman, Jordan, which took place from the 24 of April to the second of May of this year. A detailed summary of the field visit is available on the UNICEF Executive Board website.

Mr. President, I first would like to express our sincere thanks to the Government of Jordan, UNICEF country office in Jordan and the members of the UN country team who worked so tirelessly to show us the challenges facing children in this country.

Over the past decades, Jordan has enjoyed relative peace and calm, and has proved to be remarkably resilient in a region subject to chronic political instability. However, challenges remain in terms of fiscal and economic stress, vulnerability and poverty, environmental sustainability, and high unemployment, especially among young people and women, with women’s unemployment standing at double that of men.

The joint field visit was an opportunity for Member States to see first-hand the contribution that the six agencies are making to address the impact of the regional crisis. It was also an opportunity to see how they are complementing their strategic action by supporting the resilience of host communities in Jordan, through on-going development programmes across the country.

The visit came at a critical time, as Jordan and the region face large humanitarian, environmental, security, political and developmental challenges. With the conflict in Syria entering its fifth year in 2015, Jordan is now hosting 1.4 million Syrians, of whom 628,427 are UNHCR-registered refugees. Approximately 23 per cent of all Syrian refugees are women and nearly 53 per cent are children, of whom 18 per cent are under five years of age.

The United Nations Assistance Framework (UNAF 2015-2017) for Jordan is the current strategic plan guiding the UN’s work in support of the Government, to enhance systemic reform, social equity and the delivery of quality social services, while investing in young people and preserving the environment.

The delegation noted that the UN’s engagement with Jordan’s civil society, particularly via UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women, has not only improved the delivery of services to beneficiaries, it has also strengthened the capacity of national NGOs, including in regards to monitoring and evaluation, reporting, human resources management and financial management.

During the visit, the delegation held meetings with the President of Cabinet of the Royal Court, H.E., Mr. Faiz Tarawneh, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Imad Najib Fakhoury, the Minister of Social Development, H.E. Ms. Reem Abu Hassan, and the Secretary General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ben-Yacine.

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Round table discussions were also conducted on various themes, with a focus on the UN’s role in Jordan. The delegation visited Za’atari refugee camp and undertook site visits of various agency-specific and joint projects in Baqaa, East Amman, Zarqa, Mafraq and in Azraq refugee camp.

The delegation seized the opportunity of the visit to hear briefings from some high-level UN representatives including: Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on her recent visit in the region and Mr. Kevin Kennedy, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis.

Mr. President, I would like to highlight the Bureau's observations from the field visit:

1. In order to improve the effectiveness of the system, the UNCT should work to enhance coordination among all agencies, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and in line with the UNAF.

2. The UNCT should continue to develop programming based on the Vulnerability Assessment Framework.

3. The UNCT should continue to work with the Government of Jordan to strengthen Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) and line ministries through capacity building in order to implement the UNAF.

4. The UNCT should identify further innovative ways to strengthen communication and accountability to beneficiaries, including through better communication with affected communities. To this end, the UN should work to increase the number of fluent Arabic speakers among its international staff in the field, in order to ensure the efficiency of delivery to refugees is not jeopardized by a lack of communication.

5. The UN, through RC offices in the region, should prepare a regional analysis, building on existing studies, on options to strengthen access to labour markets, promote women’s empowerment, target youth and vulnerable people (including refugees), and engage the private sector in addressing labour market issues in Jordan.

6. The UNCT should continue to work with the Government of Jordan and international financial institutions to improve access to financing that will assist in addressing underlying structural challenges and building Jordan’s resilience.

7. The UNCT should continue to support initiatives to improve social cohesion by increasing the number and scope of impact-mitigation projects that benefit both Jordanians and Syrians in areas with high concentrations of refugees. This includes greater investment in shared services such as livelihoods, employment, education, health and water and sanitation, with the aim of reducing tensions and maintaining protection space in Jordan.

8. The UNCT should continue to assist the Government of Jordan in developing a long-term comprehensive response and strengthening child protection systems in Jordan.
9. The UNCT should continue to emphasize gender equality and women’s empowerment as a cross-cutting issue and a necessary pre-condition for resilience and development, including through Arab regional meetings for exchange and sharing of experiences and best practices.

10. The UNCT should continue to strengthen its collaboration with NGOs on the ground, and facilitate greater partnerships between the Government of Jordan and civil society.

11. The UNCT should continue to work on education challenges and the high rates of youth unemployment in the country, which require further multifaceted response and interventions. The UNCT should support the Government of Jordan in its vision of investment in youth.

12. Rome-based UN agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and WFP) should examine the possibility of closer cooperation and collaboration in undertaking resilience-oriented projects in Jordan.

13. As indicated by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ESCWA, remittances by Jordanian expatriates totaled 3.7 billion JD in 2013 (12 per cent of GDP). Recognizing, therefore, the economic power of expatriates and the diaspora's role in serving as a bridge of knowledge and experience, the UNCT should promote the potential of Jordanian diaspora in the country’s economic development and efforts to foster sustainable social inclusion.

14. The UNCT should work towards more assistance in enhancing market-driven job opportunities and income-generating opportunities for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees. To this end, the UN should continue to strengthen its advocacy of enhanced labour-market access for refugees in order to ease the burden on social services and thus reduce community tensions.

Finally, Mr. President, it should be highlighted that the Jordan programme was very rich, well-organized and fulfilling.

Thank you, Mr. President.