UNICEF Executive Board Meeting
3-7 September 2013

National Statement by Ireland

at

Special Focus Session on the work of UNICEF for Children with Disabilities

delivered by

Ms. Edel Dwyer
National Statement by Ireland
Special Focus Session on Disabilities
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Mr President, Executive Director,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman

First let me express my thanks to Executive Director Tony Lake for his forward-looking statement. Ireland commends UNICEF for its continued dedication to tackling exclusion, and for highlighting, through this meeting and its State of the World’s Children Report, the opportunities to dismantle the barriers to access, participation and voice, particularly for the most marginalised.

We know that people with disabilities are more vulnerable to poverty, and that poverty itself increases the risk of developing a disability through unsafe living environments including exposure to landmines, under nutrition, lack of access to immunisation and basic treatment for common diseases. We share UNICEF’s view that if we are serious about the elimination of poverty, we need to empower the most vulnerable to influence the course of their lives and the decisions that affect them.

Ireland’s new International Development Policy, “One World, One Future”, clearly asserts our commitment to addressing discrimination and inequality, and devoting more of our resources to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities and their families. To achieve this end, we have recently pledged multi-year support for the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and look forward to the opportunity at this year’s High Level Event on Disability and Development to support an increased focus on the needs of persons with disabilities in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Ireland also has a strong partnership with the International Labour Organisation where our multi-annual programme of support focuses on assisting people with disability, especially women, secure decent work. This programme, which involves training, advocacy and legislation, is well recognised as a leader in addressing disability issues in development.
Recognising that malnutrition can be both a consequence of and a contributor to disability, Ireland very much welcomes the prioritisation of nutrition as one of the key outcomes in the UNICEF Strategic Plan. Like Ireland, UNICEF has been a strong advocate in the advancement of the nutrition agenda, and plays a key role in the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. UNICEF’s work in protecting and promoting the nutritional status of children and mothers is critical to reducing the prevalence of disease, disability and death.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan bridges a particularly critical period (2014-2017) during which we must maximise our efforts towards the delivery of the MDGs while shaping the post 2015 framework. In this regard, we welcome the strong focus in the Strategic Plan on the monitoring and achievement of key development and humanitarian results. In the collection and reporting of these results, we would promote the disaggregation of the data, particularly for marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities to help identify and tackle inequalities in health, living and learning outcomes.

Finally, Ireland commends UNICEF on its efforts to deliver these results efficiently and cost effectively, noting in particularly UNICEF’s success in achieving budget savings. We welcome the introduction of the integrated budget, and encourage continued commitment to fostering UN coherence and synergies with other funds and programmes of the United Nations Development System. This spirit of collaboration, consultation and participation was a key feature of UNICEF’s approach to the development of the Strategic Plan, and we wish to congratulate and thank Executive Director Lake and your team for the work accomplished.

Ireland looks forward to supporting UNICEF in the implementation of its plan, and to continuing its close engagement with you in the coming years.

Thank you Mr President