Mr. President, the Executive Director, distinguished Members of the Executive Board, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to address you on behalf of UNICEF staff serving around the world.

We, the staff are entrusted to carry out the work and decisions passed by you, Members of the Executive Board and our Management, and deliver on those decisions, no matter the challenges we face, even sometimes at greater risks to our own safety and security. But I want to assure you that we remain committed to working with you, in the pursuit of our noble goal, which is to achieve UNICEF’s mandate. And it is only through effective collaboration and with the contribution of all of us, that we can achieve that goal.

**Mr. President,**

Let me use this occasion to once again commend Members of the Executive Board and our Executive Director and his management team for your effective leadership and stewardship of our Organization. Many of your statements have spoken highly about UNICEF’s leadership and the many achievements the Organization continues to make on behalf of the world’s children and humanity. We are also pleased and encouraged by statements emphasizing that UNICEF staff constitutes the organization's most valuable and critical asset. And let me use this chance to commend Mr. Lake for an excellent speech to the Board on Tuesday, including his direct message to our staff in Syria. It was very well received by staff.
We know, UNICEF has realized many achievements in spite of various challenges it has had to face, including impacts of the global financial crisis, and mounting pressures from natural disasters and complex humanitarian crises to which the Organization has had to respond. Staff is very proud to have contributed to these successes. Reports presented to the Board also show that UNICEF is financially strong – and this is very good news. It demonstrates the confidence donors and partners continue to have in our Organization.

Mr. President,

Mr. Lake often emphasizes that children is UNICEF’s highest priority, and staff being the second in that order of importance. And indeed, while putting children first, he also makes effort to balance this with paying attention to staff matters in various ways. For instance, he has set aside one hour/month to meet face-to-face or by telephone with staff members; he has re-instituted the “Staff Recognition Award”; and for the first time in many years, a “Memorial Plaque” was recently unveiled in UNICEF House to honour our fallen colleagues and heroes who died in line of duty serving UNICEF and humanity.

Visits and meetings with staff both in the field and headquarters by the Executive Director and his team are more frequent, as well as hosting global staff meetings – thanks to modern technology. Current top leadership is credited for paying attention to staff issues and concerns and making effort to address them. And of course, staff has high expectations that this spirit will be maintained – as it should…….

We, in the Global Staff Association also work closely with him and his office, and Management at the different levels, in a collaborative and complementary manner to address organizational and staff-related matters. Policies and directives designed to build a stronger organization and ensure a more motivated workforce have also been put in place. For instance, “permanent contracts” have been awarded those granted are obviously pleased – but many equally deserving staff members were left-out and are unhappy. As we know, this was due mainly to the strict
criteria set out by the General Assembly Resolution. The Executive Director is aware of their high expectations to be considered for “continuing contracts” – and as promised, we are confident these will be granted before the end of 2013.

Mr. President,

I now wish to focus my statement on some of these major staff issues and concerns. And today, I will to focus on three (3) of them: – 1) staff safety and security; 2) job security; and 3) issues of equity in the workplace. These require urgent attention. But let me stress upfront that I am fully aware that some of these issues are not limited to UNICEF but also involve the staff of the wider UN Common System. Hence, our Executive Director may not be in position to take unilateral decisions on them. We believe however, that presenting them to Member States in this forum is a right thing to do… because you are the decision-makers. And by addressing these concerns would greatly contribute to improving the work environment, raise staff morale, and of course, their performance and enhance staff capacity to deliver on UNICEF mandate. We therefore count on You, Members of the Executive Board, for your support where the Executive Director is limited to do so……

1. STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY

**Staff safety and security** continues to be a major pre-occupation for all UN staff, particularly those serving in dangerous and hardship duty locations. As I discuss this critical issue of **security**, it is important to stress that the dividing line between UN & UNICEF staff is very blurred. In the field they are all called UN staff – no distinctions made…. And in some locations they have shared office or residential premises - UN premises. Therefore, very often the concerns of UNICEF staff as they relate to security are not be entirely different from those of staff of UNDP, or of other UN agencies. And whenever any of us, UN staff, is injured or killed in a malicious attack, we all grieve – knowing that it could be any of us because we are targeted as members of UN.
UN premises and residences have been attacked and continue to be attacked in different places from Algeria and Afghanistan to Pakistan and Nigeria to Somalia. As the Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon recently stressed ... “the attackers who target us have grown more sophisticated, more brazen and better armed”. He pointed out that already more than 30 UN personnel have been killed in the past 10 months alone, including 4 killed in a brazen attack on the UN compound in Mogadishu, Somalia in June. Reports show that over 300 UN personnel have died in the line of duty since Baghdad. This is unbearably too many – because even death of one of us in a malicious attack is one too many....... And we, UN staff are gravely concerned. As one staff leader has put it – “does any other civil service lose so many”?

After every attack or disaster, we re-affirm our commitment to continue our mission “stay and deliver” as Mr Lake emphasized in his address the other day. More and more colleagues are moving into conflict zones and very dangerous locations where others cannot or do not want to go. Yet, the UN flag is no longer a shield but a target. And by taking certain decisions, UN is no longer viewed as neutral party.

Mr President,

We are gravely concerned that the UN and Member States are not doing enough to ensure staff safety because staff and their families continue to pay a very heavy price. We want see staff deaths in line of duty reduced to zero. As you know, Member States have the primary responsibility to ensure protection of our staff, and we call upon you, Members of the Executive Board to work with our leadership - as you do so well – so that necessary actions are taken to make this happen.

We know that our Management is striving to improve its readiness and response in the event of an attack. But we also know that some of the structures put in place in different duty locations to support staff don’t fully reflect the increased danger they face. More still needs to be done. While speaking on behalf of all UN staff unions at the recent UN
memorial service, our staff representative stressed that ….. “if the UN wants to succeed in this important area, it must take care of its staff, keep them safe, look after survivors and never forget the families left behind who will forever carry the memories of their loved ones who paid the ultimate price”.

Mr President,

Focusing on UNICEF, in 2012, there were over 370 security incidents involving over 400 UNICEF staff in the field. They have were attacked, shot, and wounded; female staff sexually assaulted; others arrested and detained; many robbed and some abducted; and high number injured in road accidents. And sadly, 3 died in 2012 and 1 in 2013, but not through any malicious acts.

It is critically important that we continue to have serious conversation with Management, and Member States on how best to protect our staff, particularly those working in dangerous and hazardous duty locations. Let me stress once again, our colleagues working in harms-way and their families are paying a very high price.

For example, let’s just pose for a moment to reflect on the physical and psychological conditions of our staff colleagues working in Syria today. I can’t begin to imagine what it is like there ….. They are heroes and are doing excellent work. Yes, they are staying and are delivering. But you can all imagine the hardships; challenges; and sacrifices they (IPs & national staff) have to endure daily. We want them to know that we stand with them and commend them for their dedication and courage, and we are also praying for them - that they stay safe and well……

But Let me re-iterate, that our staff in Syria and elsewhere are civilians and not soldiers. Therefore, we hold Member States and our employers responsible and accountable to protect them because they do not have
the means nor the know-how to protect themselves. And this should and must apply to all staff on the ground, regardless their staff categories. And I cannot emphasize enough - *never again* should any staff member be abandoned and left in the field --- alone.... should the situation on the ground go out of control.

**Mr. President,**

We call upon the respective Members States and our Organization to take necessary measures and invest more resources to improve and reinforce security of our offices and premises. We would like to propose some of the following measures:-

**First:** - all offices, including sub-offices must achieve the required Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) and even exceed it. And lack of funds should not be used as an excuse to do less ... In this connection, we join other UN staff unions to request that use of *private security companies* should be discouraged as much as possible – and instead engage professional UN security officers.

**Second:** - a rigorous assessment of security situation and preparedness in UNICEF offices and premises be carried out. And priority ought to be given to duty locations where danger and insecurity risks are very high. These assessments should propose needed improvements to further strengthen security “readiness” and “response”. They should also look into physical conditions of accommodation premises - “guest houses” where international staff are housed – some of them are reported to be in bad conditions.

Having said this, we would like to commend the Executive Director for allocating 25 million USD to field offices to improve security.

**Third:** - we would like to see more done to support colleagues whose mental health may have suffered or affected as a result of being victim of
a malicious attack or witnessing them. For instance, sick leave, disability and recruitment/selection policies should be reviewed so that those so affected are accorded due consideration, including recognizing their health conditions. Our organization should and must continue to do its best to reintegrate and support affected colleagues.

Fourth: - families of our deceased colleagues should not be abandoned. Surviving family members need a specific package of care and support. And their children should receive medical and educational support as an official entitlement, not as an act of charity.

Mr. President,

Residential Security

The issue of **Residential Security allowance** for national staff remains a very thorny issue. As you know, under existing policy on Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards (MORSS) only IPs are given security allowances. These allowances are not extended to locally recruited, even those serving in the most difficult and dangerous locations – they don’t to receive any support, at least until now......

We continue to advocate for changes in the existing policy so they too, could be supported. I have made their case before to this Executive Board and I still do – being convinced that it is the right thing to do for them. The Executive Director is also fully aware of their concerns and their plight, and their frequent calls and appeals to him for his intervention. On my part, I wish to recognize upfront and appreciate Mr Lake’s tremendous efforts in trying to find a way to support national staff serving in those dangerous and hardship locations.

It is worth stressing that we are no longer the same UN of the past..... The veneer of inviolability that protected all us in the past - IPs and national staff, has been stripped away. That is why some of these existing policies, including this one on – “**Residential Security allowance**” needs
to be looked into, changed and harmonized. We call upon Members of the Executive Board help us and use the convening powers you have to bring about the required policy change - and support national staff to be given this allowance.

**Rest & Recuperation (R&R)**

**Mr President,**

Another issue of concern to IPs is **Rest & Recuperation (R&R).** R & R is given to IPs working in hardship locations so they can take breaks and alleviate accumulated tension, stress, and tiredness and ensure optimal performance. This also affords them an opportunity to visit their families. They receive a travel lump sum for their transportation cost to their R&R destination, plus terminal expenses. They no longer receive “Daily Subsistence Allowances” (DSA).

Reports from the field suggest that due to the discontinuation of DSA less than 50% of international staff members are actually taking their R & R as authorized, or defer it for later. Concerned staff members have indicated that it has become too expensive to take these needed periodic breaks. They also indicate that very often their designated R & R destination is not where their families reside.

Consequently affected staff members seem to compromise their health and well-being and ultimately their performance and quality of their work. In addition, this may also act as a real disincentive to highly qualified and experienced senior staff from wanting to move to those non-family and hardship duty locations – reports received suggest that senior level posts remain unfilled for extended periods in some of these high-risk duty locations. In our view, the situation is urgent and calls for
action, - including the need to re-visit and revise the applicable policy on R & R.

Once again, Member States can assist in reversing the decision that led to abolishment of DSA. This is hurting staff members concerned, it is affecting families, but it is also affecting the Organization. Obviously failing to take these “breaks” may finally lead to poor performance and poor quality work. The opportunity costs could be very high indeed….. the Organization may end up paying a very heavy price….

For now we would like to propose that: - 1) IPs serving in dangerous or hardship duty locations be given priority for “mobility” to family duty locations after serving a maximum of not more than two (2) tours of duty in such duty locations; and 2) the “mobility and rotation” policy to be expedited so that it is in place before end of this year (2013) as has been promised.

**Danger Pay Allowances**

**Mr. President,**

We would like to re-visit the issue of “danger pay” because it remains highly controversial and very divisive, particularly among locally recruited staff. All UN staff working in hardship locations are given a “danger pay” allowance. The main contention right now is that – IPs receive much more than their national staff colleagues – yet there are serving in same location. Despite a recent 5% increase (from 25-30%), national staff still object strongly. They stress that - life is life, and none ought to be treated less or more important than the other – they call this ..... “double standards.” We fully agree with that….. The right thing to do is to eliminate this inequality altogether and harmonize it for all staff. This has been done successfully before for “Daily Subsistence Allowance” (DSA) –
danger pay is much easier to accommodate because only very few duty locations have danger pay regime....

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) can fix this problem very easily provided there is good will from the parties concerned in taking this decision. Once again, we appeal to the Members of our Executive Board to support revision the existing provisions on danger pay....

2. JOB SECURITY

Mr President,

Today, the issue of Job insecurity is the hottest issue being raised by staff across the Organization. There is a lot of anxiety and uncertainty among staff regarding their jobs - many wonder whether they will still have a job tomorrow or near future. This situation is driven mainly by a combination of major developments and changes taking place simultaneously in our Organization at this point in time. They include among others – 1) a new Medium Term Strategic Plan; 2) a new quadrennial budget cycle; 3) more and more Member States graduating into the ranks of “middle” income countries based on the GNI per capita; and 4) a new reform initiative popularly known as E & E (Effectiveness & Efficiency Initiative) – whose roll-out may be very soon. I will endeavour to elaborate on these below.

Mr President,

There is probably no other issue that pro-occupies staff more than job security. After all, despite the fact that over 90% of UNICEF staff says that they are proud to work for UNICEF and to serve children, at the end
of the day, all of us need that pay cheque at the end of the month. We depend on it and our families rely on it ... and we need it.... It is no surprise therefore that (We), staff should be so concerned when our jobs seem to be at stake..... In part, their anxieties are well-founded. During the last biennium, over 1,250 posts were abolished and budgetary constraints cited as the main cause. However, it is important to give credit to the Executive Director for his efforts to minimize job losses. For example, a Memo was issued to all offices – popularly known as “DED’s Memo of 22 Sept/2011” and called on them to support staff on abolished posts. It has had some positive impact, especially during recruitment where staff on abolished posts have benefited from it, and been re-hired. Available data shows that around 38% of those affected have been re-hired and retained. But unfortunately many colleagues have not been so lucky and have lost their jobs and have been separated.

And now, that a new “global budget cycle” and different OMPs have been approved by the Board, another high number of posts will be abolished as recommended. And soon many colleagues may begin to receive notifications of termination of contracts. Obviously, that is the tough part for the staff members concerned – it is not so easy to find equivalent jobs in the market place.

But let me underline here - that (we), staff are neither proposing that posts should not be abolished, nor new ones created, nor that no staff member can lose a job. Indeed, the Organization should be able to change, adapt and innovate in order to better meet today’s and future needs of children. Nevertheless, our leadership should take into account the human dimension when embarking on new organizational or program changes and new and ambitious initiatives. After all, as You, Members of the Board and the ED frequently stress – we are “the most important asset of the organization”. Therefore, it is important avoid
giving impression that - “staff is a liability”. As the Ombudsman of the Funds and Programmes has underlined, when staff are regarded as a liability, this can result in major conflicts, lawsuits or serious reputational damage to the Organization.

Abolition of posts constitutes one of the leading causes of conflicts and tensions in the work place – as highlighted in the Global Staff Survey (2011), and in reports of the Ombudsman. As the Ombudsman has pointed out – these conflicts often arise because of ad hoc decision-making in absence of long-term vision and strategy, ineffective communication, lack of transparency in budgetary decision-making, and ambiguities in the process of abolition of posts. Another common perception is that posts are abolished as a means to get rid of certain individuals or groups not liked or favoured; or as back door to reward and recruit those favoured; or as a way to replace staff with non-staff.

Of course, this perception cannot be over-generalized for all offices – many offices and managers are doing a great job, and staff members are happy. But the fact that it is happening may not completely over-looked and neglected.

During implementation of the new OMPs, the Staff Association is ready to work with the Executive Director to look into these concerns and ensure that the principles of fairness, transparency, and justice are respected by all, and any bad practices found fully addressed.

**Effectiveness & Efficiency Initiative (E & E),**

**Mr President,**

The new E & E Initiative, in many ways has become a flagship reform concept for UNICEF. But I can’t emphasize enough how much UNICEF
staff are concerned and have developed real fear that more staff members may lose their jobs following its implementation.

E & E is being designed around 3 main pillars – 1) to improve transaction efficiency; 2) simplify business processes; and 3) stream-line Headquarter functions. Design work on “transaction efficiency” (by KPMG) is more advanced than the other 2 strands. For lack of a better term – staff views transaction efficiency pillar as the “pillar of death”- because of its potential adverse impacts on staff jobs. It proposes to “off-shore” some key transaction functions in - finance, human resources (HR), and IT (Helpdesk) to “shared service centres”. Two options are proposed: - a “global shared service centre” and “multi-location shared service centres”.

KPMG has proposed Malaysia to be the preferred location for a “global shared service centre”, but also service UNICEF offices in Asia and the Pacific; and Hungary and Panama proposed as the Multi-location service centres. Hungary would service offices in Europe, MENA, ESAR and WCAR; while Panama would service offices in the Americas and the Caribbean.

At this juncture “off-shoring” is no longer a remote idea, but potentially - a reality. Next week the GMT is expected to review these design options for “shared service centre models”. Then, it will be up to the Executive Director to decide on next courses of action....

Mr President,

Mr. Lake has set the tone stating that – UNICEF needed to embrace (E & E) in order to ensure that the organization achieves good “value for our money”. He also stressed that when staff becomes more efficient and effective, that they would free-up more time for staff to focus on other
important program activities. This view has received wide support from staff mainly because we (staff) are also convinced of the need to do our best for the world’s children – by continuously improving and becoming more effective and efficient.

Just to add that ED has also re-affirmed the following to staff:- that E&E is not designed to be a cost-cutting initiative, nor intended to down-size and cause job losses; that no decisions have been taken; that any proposed changes will be based on evidence; and no artificial deadlines will be set. On this last point, he has said that - ..... “we are taking the time we need to do this right”.

Mr President,

This is all well said, and the Staff Association have had no reason to doubt his stated intentions. And from the viewpoint of the Staff Association, consultations have been open, transparent and inclusive. But what really concerns staff at this point in time, is the fact that the proposal to achieve cost efficiencies mainly centres on “Staff cost savings”. And obviously, this would seriously impact staff and in a way contradicts the Executive Director’s own words quoted above – that Initiative is not intended to down-size and cause job losses.

For instance, KPMG estimates that approximately 2,200 staff members (about 20% of total workforce) would be affected by creation of “shared service centres” – and that around 450 posts could actually be abolished. And as they say - “the devil is in the details” – the full picture is not yet fully known.

But it is now clear to staff that General Service (GS) staff will be affected much more. According to the study, whatever the number of posts finally affected, – over 70% ..... will be occupied by General Service (GS) staff. Based on these figures, it is no surprise that GS staff members
currently performing those transaction functions have become very nervous and extremely concerned. Whilst IPs can be relocated to serve in the newly created “off-shore” locations, GS staff cannot.

Should the Executive Director decide to go ahead with these proposals, then there will be an urgent need the Organization to deal with concerns of affected GS staff members in a timely and meaningful manner because their morale seems to be badly shaken and a real sense growing anxiety among their ranks.

For IPs, KPMG has proposed a “lift & shift” approach, but only for NYHQ staff. On this point, we recommend this option to be open to IPs in other HQ locations, as well – staff are asking, why only NYHQ staff. It is important to treat all affected staff in a fair, transparent and equitable manner – not set double standards, even if the logic may make sense….

**Mr President,**

The study suggests that by moving transactions to “shared service centres”, the Organization hopes to realize savings of between $26 - $27 million/year savings. As mentioned earlier, these only represent staff cost savings. But there is a strong suspicion among some of the staff that these numbers given in the KPMG study may be over-optimistic. And indeed it is important to ensure they are validated and not accepted wholesale when decisions have to be made.

We fully support the need to save money and the notion of – “value for money”. But, in our view, the present business case does not seem to be complete and compelling. While on one hand it presents details on staff cost savings, it is very short on details on other important elements of cost. These include costs and expenses linked to the creation of the
“shared service centres”, operating expenses, implementation costs, and costs linked to human resources, e.g. – separation costs, relocation costs, re-profiling and recruitment, training, etc….. There is also very little discussion about what happens to the “Retained Organization”. Evidently, it would not be business as usual – there will be significant changes particularly relating to human resources. These are all critically important cost considerations to take into account when making a holistic business case. Current “Cost Benefit Analysis” is therefore too limited in scope to allow for good decision-making.

The consultant has suggested that these considerations will be addressed after the Executive Director has taken decision to move forward…. We would be reluctant to support that approach for reasons given. As the Executive Director has re-affirmed, the decision should be guided by evidence – but certainly this should not be limited to staff costs.

We believe that the Executive Director will want to have a full picture of costs and savings, including short- and long-term sustainable efficiency gains before he takes final decision. But let me also reiterate that the Staff Association having worked closely with Management team in the Steering Committee and in the Working Groups and work streams, we are ready to continue this work together to ensure the best decision is reached.

Having said that, let me also add that even at this very late stage of evidence gathering and consultations, staff still express a lack of clarity on the overall vision and roadmap to guide staff through this highly complex reform process. And absence of this has left some of the staff to speculate about the end point or real strategic intent of this Initiative.

They support this view by pointing out that implementation of “shared service centres”, or “hubs,” is already underway – in TACRO, ROSA,
MENA and ESAR. And more and more “hubs” are being created. And staff in those locations expresses a lot of concerns because their creation has already resulted in significant job losses.

And by the way, another section of staff wonder why the Organization is trying to engage in such complex and time-consuming exercise when staff across the board are doing an excellent job - albeit having too much work to do; and the design process is costing the Organization a lot of money that would be better spent on children. In their view, the Organization is doing a great job so far, and also financially sound - so they ask - if it isn’t broken, why fix it?...... They also point out that there are other ways – some even more straight-forward and easier, that the Organization could use to save the $27 million/year without causing such a massive turbulence and among its workforce. Travel being one of the candidates mentioned, but there are others of course.

They also point that “off-shoring” to lower cost locations is no longer strongly supported by industry these days. They observe that in recent years, some reputable industries have actually done the reverse movement– and brought back their activities - “on-shore.”

Mr. President,

At this late stage, we believe our focus must now shift to ensuring that impacts on staff linked to a move to “shared service centres”, are minimized. And we would like to propose the following to the Executive Director, hoping he will take them into consideration as he contemplates next steps: -

1. More and better communication of the vision and strategic intent, and roadmap for this major reform Initiative is needed. Then, staff will stop second-guessing the real intentions and motives behind E & E.
2. Since E & E may have far-reaching impacts not only to staff but to the entire Organization, we would like to propose to the Executive Director to develop contingency plans.

3. DHR (Division of Human Resources to release as soon as possible a Human Resource strategy and an action plan detailing how to manage and minimize any major shocks and impacts that the proposed changes may have on staff – both those in-scope and out-of scope. In order to ensure a smooth transition – the potential impacts this may create among the locally recruited staff when it is finally implemented need to be fully recognized and addressed upfront and fairly. As our ED has stressed, the “human resources strategy” is a crucial and integral part of implementing this initiative.

4. ED to set aside adequate funds to support implementation of the project, but paying attention to the human dimension. He needs to pay special attention to separated staff by granting generous separation packages and to re-train, re-tool and improve their skills to enable them secure alternative employment in UN or outside. This should be clearly spelt out in the “HR Transition Strategy”.

5. On issue of “Multi-locations”, we propose to create a specific centre in Africa – in Nairobi. The bulk of the global Organization’s resources and transactions go to support activities in Africa. Therefore, there is real merit to establish a “shared service centre” on the continent – instead of being serviced from Europe. Nairobi is a good candidate – it is a UN HQ location and UNICEF already has a big presence there….. also listed by KPMG as potential centre….
6. During the transition period, qualified and experienced GS staff should be given more consideration during recruitment to International posts – especially for posts moving to the “shared centres”. They should also be considered for re-assignment or stretch assignments to the “shared centres”. The Organization should also look into “Outplacement” opportunities to other UN agencies.

Voluntary separation should be encouraged and separation packages made more generous. We also propose that for all vacant posts, including those created in the new global budget & OMPs be frozen and not filled until implementation of the Initiative is rolled out. The Organization to also take advantage of posts vacated through natural attrition and kept unoccupied.

On the other hand, the Organization should not and must not use non-renewal of “Fixed Term” contracts as a way to avoid paying “Termination Indemnities” to affected staff. The study currently proposes to let contracts expire so that termination benefits are not paid out - this would disadvantage long-time serving staff members, and we would not support this position.

7. ED to ensure that creation of “shared service centres” does not further exacerbate the existing imbalances in gender and geographic diversity.

Mr President,

These are some of the major concerns and issues highlighted by staff - we hope that Mr Lake will consider them as he contemplates the next steps. As one staff member has noted – ED should bear in mind sustainability factors – what appears to be the best option now may not be the best 5 years from now given the rapidly evolving situations on the ground in the Member states.
But let me also reiterate that the Staff Association having worked closely with the executive director and his Management team in the Steering Committee and in the Working Groups and work streams, we are ready to continue this work together with him to ensure the best decision is reached.

EQUITY IN THE WORK PLACE

Mr President,

Regarding issues of equity in the workplace, I would like to focus my statement on -- gender and geographical diversity; and inequities linked to staff salaries and benefits based on staff categories.

Gender and geographical diversity

On the issues of gender and geographical diversity, the Executive Director has stated that "UNICEF’s greatest strength is the staff, and that their collective experience, expertise and diversity make us more effective" – and has also stressed that an important way to do so lies in addressing the existing deficits in women and citizens from “program countries”. These are very encouraging remarks and we want to see them turn into reality.....

Mr. President,

Currently UNICEF has a total work force of 11,429 staff representing – i) 26.1% internationally staff (IPs); ii) 28.8% national professionals (NOs); and iii) 45.1% General Service staff (GS). Females account for 48.2% of the total; and 49.7% among the IPs. Clearly based on these overall figures, it is apparent that UNICEF is on track to achieve gender balance.
However, if one pays attention to the different staff categories, imbalances in gender diversity become more evident. For instance, data shows that in the senior staff category – (P-5s and above), females account for only 43%; and even more pronounced in the higher staff categories – e.g. at D-1 level, male staff members represents 65%.

On the other hand, DHR data shows that among the junior and middle staff categories – i.e. P-I to P-4, the situation is reversed - females account for around 53% of the total. And among the P-1 & P-2 staff categories, the number of females is even much higher - exceeding 63%.

Two important conclusions emerge regarding gender diversity in the IP staff category:- 1) males dominate the higher echelons of decision-making in our organization; and 2) On the other hand, there are marked and obvious imbalances against male staff in the lower IP staff categories, especially in P-1 & P-2; but also in P-3 & P-4. All things being equal, this may give an impression that female candidates are being given better consideration during the selection and recruitment process.

Therefore, as the Executive Director tries to address these imbalances – as I know he is already doing, it is also important to have a comprehensive and full review of all staff categories and not focus only on senior level positions.

**Geographical diversity**

**Mr President,**

On the issue of geographical diversity in the IP staff category, available data shows that staff from “Industrialized” countries account for 54% compared to those from “program” countries. There are even more pronounced imbalances in favour of “industrialized” countries, particularly in TACRO, CEE/CIS, NYHQ and other HQ locations –
accounting for 56%, 60%, 66% and 77%, respectively. On the other hand, in ESAR, WCAR, and ROSA, staff members from “program” are more than “industrialized” countries – accounting for 60%, 57%, and 52%, respectively.

Among the senior staff category (P-5s and above), data shows that “program countries” account for only 36% of the total. And at the higher levels of – D-1, D-2, and ASG/USG, the differences are even much higher in favour of “industrial countries”– they account for 77% (D-1), 84% (D-2), and 75% (ASG/USG). And quick glance at an important group of regional directors (7) - all of them except one are, from “industrial countries”.

In the lower IP staff categories (P-1 to P-4), data shows that the gaps have narrowed to near parity – staff from “program countries” accounts for 49%. However, again further analysis of the data shows that this is largely attributed to a disproportionate very high number of staff from “program” countries occupying the lowest echelon of that group – where they account for 71% of all IP staff in that category (P-1 to P-4).

Clearly, the Executive Director still has much work to do to achieve the balance staff would like to see. And I have no doubt that he is trying. But the workforce is still highly skewed in favour of staff from industrialized countries occupying senior and influential positions in the Organization. It is also evident that certain groups – racial, linguistic, etc... tend to dominate the workforce while most of the other groups are almost kept out.

Another important factor is the marked shift at the senior level where more female staff members are leaving the organization – this has been called a “brain drain”.

We would like to see the Executive Director to take firm and concrete actions and redresses these obvious inequities. Their continued
persistence is a source conflicts – some of it silent and latent, and unhappiness among the different staff groups, and staff categories.

Mr President,

Equally important, the Organization also needs pay attention to the situation of locally recruited staff. Together they constitute almost 74% of UNICEF’s total work force. They are a very vital group and the Organization must demonstrate that it cares for them, particularly in terms of providing them more opportunities for professional growth, promotion and mobility to higher levels, including in the IP category. The Executive Director has expressed commitment and desire to address these concerns. We know that he and his senior team are trying had and we commend him, including the recent revisions introduced into the NETI Program. But the “trickle down” approach may not be adequate given the limited opportunities and inherent structural barriers linked to: work experience, and academic qualification requirements that tend to work against them.

Nevertheless, we recommend to the Executive Director to put in place a concrete action plan to advance geographic diversity in UNICEF’s workforce. This is an issue of great interest to staff across the Organization, and they are keenly aware and watching the way this is being addressed. They call upon the Executive Director to walk the talk.

Salaries of locally recruited staff

Mr President,

As we know, economies of some of the Member States are fragile and often are in serious distress due to high inflation or devaluation of their local currencies. As a result, salaries of UN locally recruited staff serving in those countries also tend to be very low compared with those of staff
working in duty locations with stable economies and well-paying comparators. I have previously cited cases of our staff in countries such as - Eritrea, Bhutan, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Madagascar, etc..... Today, the list is longer and growing fast, as more and more economies of Member States fall into decline. And as long as the local economies of those countries remain depressed and weak, every month our staff members from these duty locations continue to experience severe financial hardships due to losses in their purchasing power. Those affected often send distress messages to the Executive Director, the International Civil Service Commission (ISCS), and to the United Nations. And what they ask for is simply to be paid......... a “living wage”........

For some of them the situation has become very desperate – and some of them have threatened to take unusual measures of industrial action – and some have gone ahead with strikes. More recent examples include, South Sudan and Malawi. This may be just the beginning ....

Mr President,

I would like to remind that salaries of another UN staff category are constantly updated and stabilized using “post-adjustment indices” - designed to take into account changes in the local economy due to inflation and fluctuations in exchange rate of the local currency. Their base/floor salary scale is also fixed as a minimum salary payable to all staff in a given staff category at all duty stations. And this makes a lot of sense because in this way, staff members’ monthly earnings are protected against major shocks of inflation or devaluations in the local currency. Then, the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” is upheld – but only for some of the staff members, and not others.

Affected locally recruited staff argue strongly against this glaring inequity in incomes between them and the rest when, in fact they are doing work of equal value. The basis for determining salaries for locally recruited staff needs a major over-haul in order to reflect current realities,
particularly the existing inequities in staff salaries of the United Nations where staff members who - often having same education qualifications, doing the same kind of work and, even work in same duty location or office, are paid vastly different salaries.

We continue to stress and to advocate for them with the Executive Director, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), and continue to appeal to you, Members of the Executive Board. We need your help as Member States to advance this through the ICSC and UN. We believe that it is the right thing to do –UN staff members regardless their duty locations should be able to earn a living wage.

Mr President,

As interim measure, we support their proposal to pay their salaries to be **paid in USD or Euros** as applicable. This is not new and it is already happening in different duty locations around the world. What is different is that it is not done in a consistent manner – it is paid in some locations and not others, even if their economic conditions are similar. Doing so will minimize the sudden negative impacts on their salaries due to inflation or devaluation of the local currencies. It is important to stress that staff salaries are calculated in US Dollars and processed in one place (NYHQ). Therefore, there would be no additional financial burden on the organization. In fact, we believe that this would be a **win – win** situation for affected staff members, and UNICEF would benefit more from higher staff morale and productivity.

Once again, the affected staff members call upon the Executive Director to look into their specific and urgent case and do something about it.
Education Grant for Locally Recruited Staff

Mr President,

Education Grant (EG) continues to raise a lot of heated debate and cause discontent among locally recruited staff. We know that according to UN Regulations and Rules, they are not entitled to receive EG. Yet, the UN also stresses that education of children is fundamental to building a more prosperous, peaceful, equitable, and sustainable and an inclusive world.

We have raised this issue here before, and will continue to raise it. The issue can never go away because it is so fundamental – being one of the most glaring inequity existing in the UN. Those 74% of UNICEF staff call upon the Executive Director to make a strong case for them whether before the Executive Board, and in the wider United Nations common system so that they too, could obtain some form of education support for their children.

And as an interim measure, we recommend to the Executive Director to create an “education fund” to support children of UNICEF staff members that may be facing hardships to educate their children, due to different circumstances. Criteria for selection of the recipients can be worked out. As the Executive Director advocates for “universality” of rights for all children, your staff members request you to do the same for their children…… As we know too well, In many Member States, especially in program countries, educating children is very expensive and access to good schools is a huge challenge.
EXTENSION OF MATERNITY LEAVE TO 6 MONTHS

Mr. President,

UNICEF is, and continues to be a very strong advocate of breast-feeding and has recommended 24 weeks of exclusive breast feeding. This is based on scientific evidence which shows enhanced survival benefits for the babies. And many mothers around the world are heeding that call. Likewise, more and more Member States have enacted legislations extending maternity leave to six months or longer to further encourage the mothers to breast-feed.

Ironically until now, our female staff members in the UN system are only entitled to maternity leave of 16 weeks with full pay. That means that our female staff members cannot do what UNICEF preaches to be very beneficial for their own babies. Whereas our female colleagues know very well applicable UN Regulations and Rules on this matter, they still express real disappointment against UNICEF leadership for not doing enough advocacies about their specific case as “nursing mothers”. And if any advocacy work is taking place at all, these staff members say that they are not hearing it coming in any forum, including in UNICEF or the wider UN system or in the public domain.

They therefore question sincerity of the staff leadership when we communicate that the Executive Director is equally concerned and is working hard on it..... In their view, they believe that this is an issue that could be resolved quickly because more and more Member states continue to publically celebrate victories of breast-feeding mothers in their capitals – and passing legislations extending maternity leave to 24 weeks or longer for their women.

They call upon the Executive Director to do more and play more active role to influence needed policy changes in the UN system. They want it urgently, and they want it very soon...... They argue that UNICEF leadership has higher responsibility and calling than any other United Nations agency on this particular issue.
We believe that the Executive Director will find opportunity to communicate with UNICEF female staff on the on-going efforts to address this issue. But we are also confident that required policy changes will come out soon enough. After all, Member States have set the example, and UN should have little excuse not to follow through with this...... Let me use this opportunity on behalf of our female staff colleagues to appeal to Members of our Executive Board to support our Executive Director so that UN female staff can also enjoy the benefit for their babies what women in your countries are enjoying.

EXTENTION OF RETIREMENT AGE TO 65 YEARS

Mr. President,

General Assembly Resolution 67/240 raised the mandatory age of retirement to 65 years for new UN staff members joining with effect from 1 January 2014. We welcomed with appreciation the decision of the general Assembly to increase the retirement age for new staff. However, we have also been advocating for extension of the same increase, as an option, for existing UN staff. This is very much in line with the shifts in workplace policies among the different Member States worldwide as people now live longer and healthier and can be productive for a longer period of time. Some Member States have even proposed to extend the retirement age up to 70 years. In fact, last week, a story in the New York Times Newspaper carried a story of an employee of the New York Subway transit System who retired at the young age of 91 years, and was reported to be still in excellent condition.

In a recent joint survey by all UN staff unions/associations of staff views from over 8,000, an overwhelming majority of staff supported the increase in the mandatory age of retirement to 65 years for existing staff. But staff also emphasized that the acquired rights of those who are
currently in the system to retire with full benefits at their current mandatory retirement age of **60 or 62** years be maintained.

It is in light of this that we have welcomed recent decision of the International Service Commission (ICSC) at its 77th Session to raise the Mandatory Age of Separation to 65 years for current staff members, effective January 2016. ICSC’s decision also reiterated that **acquired rights** of current staff members to retire at the Normal Age of Retirement – either 60 or 62 years will be preserved.

**Mr. President,**

(We) are confident that when finally this recommendation moves to the UN General Assembly this Fall, that Member States, including Members of our Executive Board will endorse and promulgate that decision.

We are convinced that increasing (MAS) to 65 years would constitute a big win-win for **staff** and the **Organization.** It will bring UN into line with the global longevity trends. And by establishing one retirement age for all UN staff should bring about equity by harmonizing treatment of all UN staff. The UN Joint Pension Board has also emphasized that its promulgation should enhance sustainability of the Pension Fund. It should also result in improved retention of institutional knowledge and experience, allowing our Organization more time to manage succession planning. We also believe that it would help to boost staff morale.

Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to call upon, You, Members of our Board and the Executive Director to support and facilitate passage of this worthy decision of the ICSC to extend retirement age to 65 years for current staff members.
Mr President,

As I conclude, let me once again thank you, Mr President, Members of the Executive Board and the Executive Director for giving staff this opportunity to have such a dialogue with you.

I believe that, together we can build a very strong UNICEF with staff that enjoys “equitable” treatment and is enthusiastic, committed, effective and efficient, and is truly diverse and highly productive.

We continue to look to the Members of the Executive Board to guide the Executive Director and staff – mainly via your sound decisions and recommendations on possible courses of action to address the many challenges facing our organization, and those critical issues affecting staff of different categories and backgrounds who are striving to serve the world’s children in different corners of the world and very often, under very challenging conditions.

I thank you for your kind attention.