Thank you Mr. President.

Sweden wishes to make the following statement on the Midterm Review of the Country Program for Iraq.

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Alipui for the interesting presentation of the Midterm Review. Sweden welcomes the results achieved and recognizes the challenges facing the program. Considering the fact that many cooperation partners are phasing out their engagements in Iraq, the continued presence by the UN, including UNICEF, becomes even more important.

The Midterm Review describes well the progress within different sectors, as well as the recommendations for strategic focus for the rest of the program period. However, Sweden would have liked the review to present a clearer picture and more elaborate analysis of UNICEF’s capacity and working methods, including challenges linked to implementation and delivery of expected results.

Sweden finds the recommendations relevant and supports the proposed focus and ways forward. We welcome that UNICEF intends to give priority to the most vulnerable children and women in its continued work. The integration of conflict prevention and management perspectives in the program is also most welcome. Sweden appreciates the shift in the program towards increased field presence and programmatic focus on highly deprived areas. In this respect, we welcome UNICEF’s establishment of an office in Basra – despite prevailing challenges.

Mr. President,

Sweden realizes that normative work is a challenge in many contexts, especially in fragile states. Nevertheless, Sweden encourages UNICEF to follow up on the normative work in Iraq, including the reporting to the Child Rights Committee. Adequate support should be allocated to the Country Office in order to find functional working methods for program cooperation and yielding results in this regard.
The Midterm Review indicates that resource mobilization is expected to constitute a challenge for the remainder of the program period, and Sweden agrees with this conclusion. For successful implementation of planned activities, Sweden suggests that an enhanced cost- and burden sharing between UNICEF and the Government of Iraq is required.

Finally, let me extend Sweden’s appreciation to UNICEF’s staff, many of whom work under difficult conditions and in areas with threats to their security.

Thank you, Mr. President.