

18 March 2022

Excellencies,

UNICEF is grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the 2020 assessment undertaken by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). We would like to sincerely thank the MOPAN Secretariat along with Switzerland and the United States of America for championing this assessment and extend our gratitude to ITAD and Universalia for conducting the assessment in a collaborative, consultative and professional manner using a rigorous methodology. As an organization that highly values critical and constructive feedback, whether through external reviews, such as the MOPAN assessment or through its own independent evaluation function, we saw this exercise as a further opportunity to learn, reflect and improve so that we can help realize the rights of every child in ever-better ways.

We are strongly encouraged by the report's overarching conclusion that UNICEF is an effective organization that strives for continuous improvement. We also sincerely appreciate the report's acknowledgement of the commitment of UNICEF staff to addressing the challenges that children face and to improving the lives of the most vulnerable.

We are also encouraged by the report's finding that our Strategic Plan enables us to implement our goals for children. This is aided by a focus on implementing normative frameworks in development and humanitarian action, a sound financial framework, and a commitment to gender equality. Furthermore, the report stated that the resource mobilization strategy supports the achievement of the Strategic Plan, helping to maximize regular resources and leverage public and private sector resources, supported by financial accountability practices in auditing, internal controls, and anti-fraud which ensure transparent and accountable systems.

Her Excellency
Mrs. Pascale Christine Baeriswyl
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the United Nations
New York

Mr. Nicholas Hill
Minister Counsellor of the United States Mission
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The assessment found that, in particular, UNICEF needs to strengthen the efficient delivery and sustainability of results; that our outcome-level results are off track and thereby slowing UNICEF contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), despite strong output-level results; that UNICEF's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan is less clearly aligned with humanitarian principles and policies than with the SDGs; that our role in country strategies does not maximize contributions from national capacities; and that our partnership model focuses on programme implementation, fundraising and advocacy more than on developing catalytic partnerships.

UNICEF is committed to continuously learn and improve its approaches throughout the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 implementation period, by continually adapting and refining its theories of change, strategies and country programmes based on programme monitoring, lessons learned from programme implementation, emerging evidence from data analysis and research, evaluation, innovation to identify breakthrough approaches, and feedback from partners.

The Mid Term Review (2020) of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the Evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 universally recognize and respond to the urgent need to match UNICEF's successful delivery of outputs with accelerated contributions to outcomes for children. The explicit outcomes focus of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 reflects this ambition, including placing stronger emphasis on change strategies and enablers, and identifying multi-sector systemic outcomes in the theory of change. In particular, the outcome-level focus in the Strategic Plan is being operationalized through new Global Effectiveness Reviews, building on existing strengths in results-based management and evidence-generation to regularly monitor and adjust corporate plans in response to emerging data on programme effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. On-going efforts to strengthen the linkages between UNICEF's data function and our independent evaluation function will help ensure that these reviews are as robust as possible.

UNICEF strives for programme sustainability. Our programmes are implemented in partnership with governments, local communities and international partners to enhance ownership and sustainability of programmes after the UNICEF intervention has ended. UNICEF will work with strong national systems, effective sector institutions, and a robust accountability framework, recognizing that these are key pre-requisites for long-term programme sustainability. UNICEF also uses Communication for Development (C4D) capabilities to promote social and behavior change, generate demand and strengthen accountability at the local level.

Additionally, the full implementation of the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in humanitarian crises and fragile settings informs a larger number of priority outputs in each of the five Goal Areas. The CCCs are formally situated as one of the 10 Medium-Term results in the Strategic Plan's Theory of Change. Main indicators have been selected and applied to the respective Results Areas expressing immediate results to meet a series of benchmarks outlined by the CCCs.

At the country level, programmes are aligned with national priorities while flexibly responding to changing situations and delivering relevant results. There is also strong engagement with UN partners through the United Nations Development System Reform and global strategic partnerships aimed at accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs. The assessment also established that UNICEF has developed a results-based management system and results framework that applies at global and country levels, supported by an independent evaluation function.

UNICEF is introducing new tools for Country Programme Effectiveness Reviews into programme monitoring: incorporating structured assessments of programme effectiveness, sustainability, and catalytic contributions to outcomes. The Country Programme development process is being made quicker, and more aligned with UN reform processes, to strengthen the strategic focus of programme rationale on catalyzing national resources and leveraging strategic partners. This more agile and adaptive approach includes frequently updated situation analyses and deeper linkages between humanitarian and development planning tools. Furthermore, the end-to-end digitalization of partnership management through eTools is generating new and rich data that is opening-up opportunities for systematic analysis and management of programme implementation timeliness, quality, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. Finally, we are reviewing the procedure and guidance related to programme risk management and related capacity building of UNICEF staff and implementing partners. Efforts are in place to strengthen implementing partners' (especially local partners') capacity in results-based management and risk management including PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse), financial management, and evaluation capacity to engage in evidence-based approaches to the SDGs.

UNICEF is also enhancing its partnership model with other UN agencies as well as partners at the country level. We have developed specific frameworks with WFP (school health and nutrition, child wasting/nutrition), with UNHCR (education, WASH, Blueprint for Joint Action), with UNDP (framework for joint action, and collaboration in response to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19), and with WHO (strategic collaboration framework).

Building on existing efforts that were well-noted in the MOPAN report, adaptive/agile programming and management is framed as one of the key features of the new outcome-focused Strategic Plan (2022-2025). UNICEF is making further efforts to strengthen the capacity and culture for adaptive programme delivery and management to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from ever-evolving operating environments.

The assessment also found that UNICEF's resource alignment to strategic priorities is complicated by our reliance on inflexible Other Resources and that our operating model and organisational structure are not purposefully aligned with the Strategic Plan. We are improving our organizational structure and funding model to better leverage and maximize our decentralized business models as a key vehicle for accelerating results for children. The Reimagining UNICEF's Business Models exercise seeks to empower UNICEF offices to deliver results for children through further decentralization and simplification of processes. Under this initiative, we are establishing Multifunctional Technical Teams as a demand-driven support to Country Offices to address emerging issues for which additional time-bound technical capacity is required.

UNICEF's ability to adequately fund strategic priorities is directly related to the clear trend of donors increasingly earmarking their contributions, at the expense of flexibility and predictability. This is despite Member States' commitments to the UNDS Reform and the Funding Compact to bring core resources to a level of at least 30 per cent by 2023, increasing the share of multi-year contributions and doubling the levels of resources channeled through development-related inter-agency pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds. We urge Member States to accelerate progress to meet their Funding Compact commitments. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown these approaches are critical and make a difference in our ability to achieve catalytic results for children.

UNICEF has diversified its funding base, and while the private sector accounts for nearly 25 per cent (on average over the past 6 years) of total UNICEF income, over 50 per cent of flexible funding (i.e., core and thematic) is generated by 33 UNICEF National Committees and 53 country offices through private sector fundraising. A total of 9.3 million individual givers around the world constitute the largest group of donors for flexible resources. This demonstrates the general public's commitment and support across the world for UNICEF's mandate and work - a very solid basis on which governments can build and increase their Regular Resources, thematic and multi-year contributions to UNICEF. Acceleration of flexible funding resource mobilisation is an organisation-wide priority with a

focus on advocacy, donor partners' visibility, enhancing thematic windows, and improved reporting. We are also developing a strategy along with simplified arrangements for pooled funding. Our goal is to have a mixture of earmarked and flexible funding spanning multiple years that go beyond a specific strategic plan.

To broaden financing options linked to the private sector, within the parameters of Executive Board oversight, UNICEF is proposing to utilize financing instruments (including concessional and flexible loans). These financing instruments will be an innovative way of collaborating with the private sector to increase investment in private sector fundraising and other critical operations of UNICEF. Use of such financing instruments will generate significant resources for repayment of principal amounts while making substantial resources available to catalyze the growth of regular resources and therefore expand funding for UNICEF country programmes.

UNICEF will also continue to build, expand and sustain partnerships with relevant public and private partners to design, learn and implement initiatives for mobilizing income and influence for children, including leveraging catalytic financing for children to support the SDGs. Implementation of partnership processes continues to be reviewed and simplified in consultation with all stakeholders (every two years).

To enhance our performance management system we are implementing the recommendations from the [Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021](#). We are operationalizing the [Strategic Plan, 2022–2025](#), to ensure that systems are in place for monitoring the utility and effectiveness of different categories of results, including those related to programme, as well as change strategies and enablers or their equivalents. This will also support the objective of strengthening organizational learning and enable reporting on these results through key management documents, such as the annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF. We are also clarifying indicators and target setting for better accountability of how each region and country contributes to the attainment of targets within the Strategic Plan. Significant investments have also been made in setting up results frameworks and real-time analytical tools/dashboards that further facilitate linking findings to timely decision making. Providing real-time data will generate trustworthy information that is simple and straightforward and on demand, thus making “the right data available to the right people at the right time”. These will reinforce the criticality of national ownership and the alignment of country programmes with national priorities.

UNICEF is also implementing recommendations from the [Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming](#) and the [Quality review](#)

[of linkages between humanitarian and development programming in the top 10 UNICEF humanitarian responses](#). In cases of tension between sustainability objectives and primacy of saving lives, the latter takes precedence; respecting Humanitarian principles and applying the Core Commitments for Children to guide approaches and decisions, as also mainstreamed and referenced in the new Strategic Plan. All goal areas refer to addressing needs of children in humanitarian crises and fragile settings integrating an approach that not only saves lives but also promotes dignity during crises, build resilient systems, accelerating progress towards the SDGs and realizing children's rights. New cross-cutting programmes on resilience, peacebuilding and climate action also orient UNICEF's work in all contexts towards addressing fragility and the root causes of conflict, crisis and displacement, while building capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises.

As mentioned above, UNICEF is dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of its work. The [2018 Revised Evaluation Policy](#) has included sustainability as an area that should be assessed in UNICEF evaluations under the human rights and gender equality norms of the policy. The evaluation and coverage norms have resulted in country offices conducting more sustainability-focused evaluations. Seven sustainability- and scalability-focused evaluations have been completed. At the same time, the Evaluation Office has increased focus on assessing sustainability of UNICEF's programmes and recently completed the [Climate and Environment Readiness Assessment](#) that informed how UNICEF can better target and improve its climate and environment strategy.

UNICEF recognizes that responding to climate change and environmental degradation needs greater emphasis in our work. For this reason, in the new Strategic Plan (2022-2025) *climate change, environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction* have been integrated and elevated to be a cross-cutting, organization-wide priority. As we embark on our new strategic plan, clear focus areas and results are embedded in each of our goal areas / global sectors and as part of our global advocacy work. These focus areas and targets are based on UNICEF's niche and collaborative advantage; in strengthening the resilience (including to disasters) of services that children will depend upon; in ensuring that climate and environmental policies have children at their heart; and in supporting young people to be climate and environmental champions. In addition, we have targets for our internal carbon emissions and, for the first time, a target and commitment to screen and manage environmental risks across all our programmes.

In addition to the foregoing actions that we will undertake at the programmatic and operational levels, it is worth noting that the MOPAN assessment will continue to positively influence our work in more far-reaching ways as we embark on the [Strategic Plan](#)

[2022-2025](#). Specifically, in the development of UNICEF's [Plan for Global Evaluations, 2022-2025](#), our Evaluation Office used the MOPAN report as one important source of insight. The first evaluation of the quadrennium is an evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025; this exercise was launched in January 2022 and is now underway. Though a distinct and differently scoped exercise than the MOPAN assessment, this evaluation will be a natural progression from the MOPAN assessment and will build on it – namely by examining, in a forward-looking manner and at the very outset of the new strategic plan period, whether UNICEF has the key elements in place to succeed in achieving the ambitious aspirations of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The MOPAN report will serve as one key input into the analysis, and this seamless integration will be ensured by the MOPAN assessment team leader, Mr. Andrew Lawday, serving as a member of the evaluation team, so that there is optimal continuity, consistency and coherence between the two exercises. The evaluation will generate recommendations, accompanied by an organizational management response process and action plan whose implementation will be carefully monitored, thus ensuring that the MOPAN assessment will have contributed to long-lasting and far-reaching positive effects on our work in the years to come.

In closing, we would also like to express our appreciation for the updated MOPAN 3.1 methodology, which includes a streamlined indicator framework and improved processes and tools that build on lessons from past assessments. We also appreciate that the approach integrated important normative frameworks of the multilateral system that guide our work, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the reform of the UN Development System, and the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

With the Decade of Action at hand, and with the COVID-19 pandemic having rolled back decades of progress made for children, there is a heightened sense of urgency for us to deliver on the needs of children and the most vulnerable. As we embark on our Strategic Plan 2022-2025, the MOPAN assessment therefore comes at particularly opportune time, providing us further insights into areas in which we need to improve in the critical years ahead and in the face of unprecedented challenges – not only the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also unsustainable development deficits, protracted humanitarian emergencies in many countries, and environmental disasters and climate change crises, all of this against the backdrop of an increase in earmarked funding and a reduction in flexible resources.

We reiterate our appreciation for the thoughtful, constructive and useful feedback that this assessment has provided. We will be working earnestly with our partners to build on our strengths and implement the needed changes in the areas that were noted for improvement.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Karin Hulshof
Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships

cc: H.E. Mr. Adrian Hauri, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, New York
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