

**Talking Points: H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima
President of the UNICEF Executive Board and
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

- I thank [DSG and] the Principals for their important statements.
- Our Executive Board stands firmly behind the efforts of UNICEF and the broader United Nations system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Allow me to begin by paying tribute and thanking the courageous and committed UN staff globally for being on the frontline battling this deadly pandemic.
- We are passing through an unprecedented human, social and economic crisis. The pandemic has had dramatic impacts on our societies. Among the most vulnerable are our children; they are hard hit; and their lives upended.
- As we have heard from the various presentations, the emergency has shown that much can be achieved through closer inter-agency collaboration, leveraging on comparative inter-agency advantages and building on the system's collective strengths to achieve the desired results.
- An effective response to COVID-19 calls for swift collaborative efforts and multilateral responses in support of national efforts. We are heartened to see the global solidarity in the pandemic response. In this Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, the response to the pandemic can further drive efforts towards UN reform implementation, with integrated approaches and innovative inter-agency partnerships at all levels. [And we have seen commendable instances of that.]
- *Mr. Chairman.* Children may not be the face of the pandemic, but too many of them, will bear the brunt of it, as their parents and caregivers face joblessness and the overall economic downfall caused by the pandemic.

They need our protection and support. UNICEF is prioritizing on continuing essential programmes and services for children and to provide support for family members and caregivers.

- In this pandemic situation, children are out of school; they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation such as domestic violence, trafficking, cybercrimes, etc. Girls are particularly vulnerable, as are children in poverty, migrants and displaced children, and those who are differently challenged.
- I join Ms. Fore in calling for prioritizing investment in all the critical sectors to ensure strong and sustainable societies that can support our children. We don't want this to become a generational crisis. It is critical that the UN system as a whole is able to continue providing essential services such as education, food, water, shelter, sanitation; as well as vaccines, health care, and social protection that are urgently required.
- The COVID situation is a testing time for the efficacy of the ongoing UNDS reform process with its reinvigorated RC system and UNCT. The pandemic is a reality; and that will require a comprehensive interagency response to fulfill the objectives of the UN's response and recovery funds fully, expeditiously in the target countries, especially in the most vulnerable countries and communities. We expect their efforts to complement that of national governments, in responding to the COVID crisis and support their socio-economic recovery.
- At the midpoint of their respective Strategic Plans, I was happy to hear from the agencies that COVID-19 response will shape programming for the remainder of their Plan periods, while preserving the gains already made towards achievement of the SDGs.
- In closing, I wish to underscore the need for [additional and] flexible funding for the UN agencies, to ensure their flexibility to respond quickly to urgent and ongoing needs in the context of the pandemic. We expect that with this support, the agencies will deliver more rapidly and innovatively, to strengthen existing systems and to build stronger and better ones.
- I thank you all very much.