Statement by
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The agenda before the Development Committee illustrates both what can be achieved when the international community pulls together, and the challenges still ahead.

This year’s Global Monitoring Report (GMR) brings good news, in the aggregate. Since 1990, the baseline year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there has been progress on many fronts, and we have achieved two historic milestones. Recent estimates show that the world met – five years early – the goals of halving extreme poverty and halving the number of people without access to improved drinking water.

**Progress for children has also been remarkable.** 12,000 fewer children under five die every day than in 1990. Stunting – the physical and cognitive damage caused to children by malnutrition – has declined from 45 to 28 percent in developing countries. There is now near parity in primary school enrolment between boys and girls. Overall, many more children are healthy, well-fed, cared for, and in school.

**However, aggregate progress has concealed massive and widening disparities,** both among and within regions, countries, and communities. And with the world barraged by multiple crises, many who have benefited from progress are on the brink of falling back into poverty. To fulfill the potential of the MDGs, and all our development goals, we have to look beyond the averages to see who is being left behind, and who needs help staying afloat – and invest more in reaching them.

**Societies which invest in the potential of all their citizens grow more equitably.** As the Managing Director of the IMF noted recently, and IMF and other research has shown, “a more equitable distribution of income can help promote economic and financial stability, and more lasting growth.”

Ring-fencing spending in key areas directed at the most vulnerable – nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation, or social protection – is critical to sustaining the MDG gains, building resilience, and underpinning durable growth, especially in the context of crises.

The results achieved so far show that partnerships for development work, that economic growth helps, and that increased investment in people delivers. But the remaining gaps make clear that a stronger focus on equity is essential going forward. We need policies that proactively target the necessities, services and protection that the poor urgently need – including those on the Committee’s agenda today: stable food prices and better nutrition, innovations to accelerate progress, and social protection.

**Nourishing the future**

Nutrition is a key example of the necessity and benefits of investing in people, and we welcome the GMR’s focus on this issue this year. Few things have a more far-reaching and long-lasting effect on an

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2. Seizing the Moment – Thinking Beyond the Crisis - Address at the Brookings Institution by Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, IMF. Washington DC, April 12, 2012
individual’s well-being and potential than the nutrition he or she receives as a child. Yet stunting – the *irreversible* physical and cognitive damage caused by chronic nutritional deficiency during the first thousand days of a child’s life – affects 180 million children today. Dozens of countries face extremely high percentages of stunting, as high as 30-40 percent. In six countries, 50 percent or more suffer from this condition.

This is not just a tragedy for children, but for their societies too. **Just as the human costs of under-nutrition are high, so too are the economic costs.** The World Bank estimates that countries blighted by under-nutrition lose at least 2 to 3 percent of GDP, as well as billions of dollars in salaried employment and avoidable health care spending. And these are the countries that can least afford such losses.

**Combatting stunting is one of the most cost-effective investments a country can make.** In 2008, the Copenhagen Consensus – a project which engaged leading economists to evaluate solutions to the world’s most persistent challenges – ranked providing young children with micronutrients the number one most cost-effective way to advance global welfare. Investing in pro-nutrition policies achieves poverty reduction, stabilizes countries, and helps them to become more resilient when they face economic crises or natural disasters.

**The cost of not investing is, sadly, all too clear.** Last year, the Horn of Africa endured a food crisis and a terrible human catastrophe. Right now, the Sahel faces a similar plight, with one million children at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Without a good emergency response and a sustained effort to build resilience in regional nutrition systems and reduce risk in the medium to long term, an entire generation there faces a future of dependency, poverty and threatened survival. UNICEF is working with governments and partners to respond and to build resilience in vulnerable communities. Our partnership with the World Bank is critical in this regard.

**The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement was established in 2010 to accelerate global efforts to combat under-nutrition, including stunting.** It has already brought together more than 100 partners jointly working to encourage, coordinate, and improve the effectiveness of support for countries who have pledged to put nutrition at the center of national agendas. Already, in just 18 months, leaders in 27 countries have signed up to SUN. We look forward to more joining.

**The importance of safe drinking water and basic sanitation**

An important call of the SUN movement is for nations to allocate a larger percentage of their development budgets to improving water, sanitation, and hygiene. Just as stunting increases a child’s risk of dying from diarrhea, diarrhea inhibits the absorption of critical nutrients, increasing the chances of stunting. Diarrhea is the second largest single cause of child deaths globally – the largest in sub-Saharan Africa – and about 88% of diarrheal deaths worldwide are attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.3

The social and **economic impacts of investment in sanitation and water are also generally underestimated.** Research indicates that the annual impact of poor sanitation is more than 5-6% of GDP in some countries, and that meeting the MDG target on sanitation would add 220 million working days a year globally. According to the World Health Organization, on average, every US$1 spent on improving sanitation entails economic gains of some US$9.4

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3 Safe Water, Better Health, WHO 2008

4 Hutton, Guy, Laurence Haller and Jamie Bartram. *Global cost-benefit analysis of water supply and sanitation interventions.* WHO. Journal of Water and Health, 05.4 2007
The good news is that the world has met the MDG target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to improved drinking water. This is a great achievement, and proof that the MDG targets can be met with the will, the effort and the funds. However, another subsection of the same MDG target – improved sanitation - remains off track. 1.1 billion people in the world today still practice open defecation.

UNICEF, together with many other partners, has worked for decades to expand access to clean water in some of the most water-stressed countries in the world. Especially when it comes to sanitation, the first step for governments and donors alike is acknowledging both the severity of the problem and the critical necessity of taking action.

The Sanitation and Water for All partnership has done just that. Real leadership has emerged over the last decade, and thanks to the participation of many Development Committee ministers, the partnership continued to build on it at the High Level Meeting held on April 20 in Washington DC. There was agreement to better target resources at the poorest people and countries; support countries in developing credible plans and stronger implementation capacity; and hold ourselves accountable for real results on the ground.

Innovations to “reach the fifth child”

Innovations in new vaccines and in service delivery programs are at the leading edge of providing other lifesaving interventions to the communities in greatest need. If we can reach these children with vaccines, we can also reach them with Vitamin A, iodized salt and other micronutrients to prevent stunting, or bed nets to prevent malaria. Combined with improved sanitation and healthy practices like hand washing, wider distribution of new vaccines against rotavirus and pneumococcal disease, which combat the biggest child killers – diarrhea and pneumonia – can radically reduce child mortality. This is especially important in humanitarian crises.

Thanks to innovations, we have made great strides in vaccinations: Today, 80% of the world’s children are receiving the big four vaccines – measles, polio, pneumonia and diarrhea – up from only around 20% in 1980. An important milestone was reached in January when India announced that it had interrupted polio transmission for one year. We must persevere to full eradication. Innovation has been vital in the fight against polio – from the development of the vaccines, to the strategy of national campaigns, to outreach efforts to build demand, and to effective partnerships to shape the market and reduce prices.

Nevertheless, 1 in 5 children are still being left behind, and global vaccination campaigns to eliminate diseases like polio and measles cannot succeed without reaching this fifth child. For a long time, and still today, most development experts have believed that it is simply too expensive to focus on the hardest to reach children. On the contrary, a UNICEF modeling exercise has found that every additional dollar invested in reaching the most vulnerable children can avert up to 60% more child deaths than the current approach in the poorest countries with the highest child mortality rates. This is highly significant, especially at a time of global fiscal constraint when we must make every development dollar count. With this in mind, UNICEF is intensifying all of its efforts, in every country, to reach the most vulnerable and isolated communities.

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6 *Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals*, UNICEF Special Report, September 2010.
As it has in the area of vaccines, innovation can help us in many others to work faster and reach farther into the most remote and disadvantaged communities. Mobile phone technology is transforming our work in emergencies—making it possible to assess needs faster, or reunite families. Partnerships with the private sector help us move supplies, introduce medical products to diagnose and treat disease better, or analyze data to detect early signs of stress on vulnerable populations. A new monitoring framework will help us manage better for results. In sum, innovation can be a means to equity. We welcome the Development Committee’s discussion on this subject.

Preserving and broadening gains

Social protection is a critical policy tool for advancing inclusive and equitable outcomes and supporting national human and economic development. It plays a vital role in strengthening the resilience of children, families and communities, including in the face of crises. The demonstrated impacts of social protection on children’s development last long beyond childhood, increasing adult productivity, decreasing the burden of human development losses and contributing to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. It also has more immediate economic impacts, enabling families to make productive investments and increase their engagement in labour markets, stimulating demand in local markets and reducing poverty.

UNICEF has recently launched its Social Protection Strategic Framework. The framework calls for the development and strengthening of integrated social protection systems as an effective approach to address the multiple and compounding vulnerabilities of children and their families, and to enhance equity. The framework puts forth a Collaborative Agenda for Action under which UNICEF proposes to work with partners in helping governments identify sustainable long-term national financing strategies for expansion and strengthening of effective social protection.

In this context, we welcome and greatly appreciate the World Bank’s focus on equity and resilience as key overarching goals of its own new Social Protection and Labor Strategy. The focus on moving from “fragmented to harmonized systems” for social protection is in line with UNICEF’s approach and we share the concern about addressing the challenges countries face in setting up inclusive and effective social protection systems, particularly in low income and fragile contexts.

We look forward to working together at global, regional, and country levels to support countries as they expand the coverage and implementation of integrated, multi-sector social protection systems. This would build on existing collaboration in countries such as Kenya, Mozambique and Viet Nam, which has proven instrumental in achieving results for the most vulnerable children, families and communities. We also continue to work with the IMF – including through specific collaboration in pilot countries – to help countries advance social protection for all and increase social investments within a growth-oriented macroeconomic framework.

Conclusion

Despite a significant decrease since 1990, every year nearly 7.6 million children still die before reaching their fifth birthday, most from preventable causes. This is approximately 21,000 children per day. Many more millions of children suffer from illnesses caused by lack of clean water, poor nutrition, and inadequate health services and care. Even if they survive, they are less likely to reach school age healthy and well-nourished, safe and confident and ready to learn.

http://www.unicef.org/socialprotection/framework/
A society in which children’s opportunities are limited by circumstances beyond their control is unjust. A society which fails to tackle these issues is also a society that is limiting its potential for sustainable, long-term growth, political and social stability and resilience. Such societies are also foregoing the most cost-effective approaches to improving children’s lives. Investment in people – especially children, the poorest, the most vulnerable – must be at the core of our efforts to achieve durable and sustainable growth.