

Statement by Ireland at the UNICEF Executive Board Annual Session June 2014

Mr. President,

Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for the Sierra Leone draft country programme. We commend UNICEF for the participatory manner in which it has been developed and its coherence with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2015-2018.

The programme appears well aligned with national priorities for Sierra Leone, including the National Health Sector Strategic Plan, the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, the education sector plan, and key child protection policies. Furthermore, UNICEF's supports for the Free Health Care Programme is an important component of the Agenda for Prosperity, the national poverty reduction strategy for 2013-2018.

The draft country programme document provides a clear analysis of the situation of women and children and draws attention to the key issues of poverty, gender inequality and malnutrition. Given that women are key producers of food crops in the country we think that agriculture, food availability and accessibility are also relevant factors to consider when analysing the country context.

We welcome the interventions that are proposed under the Child Survival component, which are both relevant and important. It would be useful to know to what extent UNICEF intends to provide these as integrated packages of interventions to communities, recognising the complementarity of, for example, nutrition and water and sanitation activities?

Within this component we are also encouraged by the plans for training of health workers and capacity development, which, accompanied by system strengthening, are critical to the delivery of high quality survival and development services.

In the area of child protection, we welcome UNICEF's work towards the reduction of child, early and forced marriage. We would encourage UNICEF to continue its coordination with other stakeholders in sensitively addressing this and other harmful practices.

Mr. President, yesterday we had the opportunity to review a number of documents of particular relevance to the Sierra Leone country programme. These include the evaluation of community management of acute malnutrition and the findings of internal audit reports, including that of Sierra Leone. We encourage UNICEF to continue to address the recommendations from these and other reports that are relevant to the Sierra Leone programme. We would also encourage UNICEF to ensure the integration of risk management in the planning and implementation of the Sierra Leone country program, in order to achieve optimum results.

Ireland's bilateral assistance programme to Sierra Leone includes a focus on several of the key areas outlined in the draft country programme. We look forward to continuing our close working relationship with UNICEF on the ground for the advancement of these priorities, in coordination with our government and non-governmental partners.

Thank you.