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***2024 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment:
UNDS efforts in implementing system-wide policies***

May 15, 2024

Excellencies, colleagues ... good afternoon. It is good to be with you.

Since its adoption in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the most ratified international human rights treaty in history. It has delivered transformative changes for children across the globe – with millions gaining improved access to health care, protection, education, and participation as full members of their communities.

But despite the tremendous impact of the Convention over the last three and a half decades, the rights of children are still very much at risk.

Today, the world's children are facing a confluence of intractable crises ... from armed conflicts, and the devastating consequences of

climate change... to persistent, entrenched, and systemic discrimination ... and from poverty, and inequality ... to the ongoing socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

Identity-based marginalisation, exclusion, hate, and intolerance continue to negatively impact children of all ages – including in the digital world.

In addition to all this, the very legitimacy of child rights is increasingly being called into question. At the global level, this includes ongoing efforts to undermine international child rights standards. While at the national level, some governments are rolling back laws and policies that protect children and women from domestic and gender-based violence ... and that support children's civil and political rights.

This is unacceptable. Children – defined clearly and legally as those under the age of 18 – constitute a group of distinct rights-holders

under international law. Every single one of more than 2 billion children, have independent status as full rights holders. They are not “youth”, they are not “young people” ... and we must not categorize them as such. They are children.

Excellencies ... it is imperative that we place children’s rights at the center of our collective development efforts ... including in our work to achieve the SDGs ... and at the center of our vision for the future. Not only is investing in children, and the systems they rely on, the right thing to do ... it also yields incredible economic, and societal dividends for everyone – which is at the heart of sustainable growth.

The Secretary-General’s Guidance Note on Child Rights
Mainstreaming presents us with a system-wide strategy for making children’s rights an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes within the UN

system.

As part of this, we must focus our efforts across a child's entire life course. And our commitment to 'leave no one behind' means we must reach all children ... including the poorest and most marginalized ... girls ... children with disabilities ... those living in humanitarian crises ... and children affected by climate change and environmental degradation.

UNICEF continues to invest significantly in system-wide plans to address gender equality, with a specific focus on adolescent girls.

Our organization is also prioritizing inclusion of children with disabilities as part of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, and our own Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy.

National budgets and public finance systems must guarantee the prioritization and protection of investments in children. And additional work to ensure adequate and efficient financing, particularly for social sectors, is critical. This requires a paradigm shift towards investing in children, and supporting them across their life-course, with a specific focus on their early years.

On this, UNICEF – as part of UN country teams – is supporting Ministries of Finance in more than 80 countries to develop integrated financing strategies for sustainable development. And we are helping governments to engage with international financial institutions so they can access development financing to support vulnerable children.

We must recognize the critical role of children's participation in sustainable development. This means working collectively to support children as agents of change. And it means advocating with governments and multilateral organizations for children's participation in decision-

making processes.

Excellencies ... the realization of the rights of all children everywhere, the achievement of our development goals, and the aims of the Summit of the Future are inextricably linked. They are also mutually reinforcing. Through political will, bold action, and innovative thinking, we can create a world fit for children ... a world fit for us all.

Thank you.