

**Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to UN, at the Annual Session 2013 of the Executive Board of UNICEF in New York on June 18, 2013**

Mr. President, my felicitations to the Executive Director Mr. Anthony Lake for an extremely informative statement and I would also complement UNICEF for an insightful report on the progress and achievements against the Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP). The Executive Board Meeting is very timely and important as it provides an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of children all over the world.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan draft has set out an extremely laudable goal: "Advancing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged". It is indeed a very noble goal to set and we are encouraged by Mr. Anthony Lake's emphasis on reaching every last child, no matter where she or he lives. It is perhaps this kind of passion and zeal that is the real hallmark of UNICEF in pursuing the cause for ensuring a much better world for our children.

Mr. President, we are also confident that as UNICEF embarks upon the finalization of its Strategic Plan, it would take into account the recommendations made by the QCPR for the UN Development System. Members states had invested considerable time and energy in ensuring that the QCPR provided the framework for the post 2015 goals as a means to develop a legacy for the UNDS, which will benefit future generations and in particular our children.

Investments in children's health and education are key imperatives for all developing countries. It is in this context that we hope that as the next UNICEF Strategic Plan takes shape, there would be no dilution of resources committed to these two key stand alone goals. A strong focus on promoting greater equity in the development process by investing in the health, education and protection of the most disadvantaged and excluded children is of utmost importance. These investments are critical in breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and help in creating more stable societies and promote sustained economic growth.

Another area that we would like you to focus further upon is on leveraging South South cooperation for the larger benefit of children in the developing world. Even though South South Cooperation has often been singled out as a new buzzword in the evolving narrative of the developmental discourse, much more remains to be done to give it the 'muscle' it needs from the UN system. The so called 'rise of the global south' is not matched by the development indicators mapped against the South in the Human Development Report.

Countries of the South, including India, have several ongoing initiatives including our joint initiative with Brazil and South Africa, under the IBSA Trust Fund, and we have already implemented some extremely critical projects with special focus for children using this Fund. We very recently inaugurated a Hospital for Children with special

needs in Cambodia and hope that UNICEF would continue to partner with countries of the South in complementing them achieve their goals, especially in those projects which have an explicit 'children friendly' focus.

Earlier this year in February in Chennai, the Government of India along with UNICEF, hosted the three day Call for Action on Child Survival and Development which reaffirmed the promise towards further reducing Under Five Mortality Rate in India. We also arrived at a set of agreed actions that will sustain the momentum and fast track our journey towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals related to maternal and child mortality. We are also looking forward to the hosting the 2nd High Level Meeting on South South Cooperation for Child rights in Asia and the Pacific in New Delhi later in October this year.

It is pertinent to point out Mr. President, that the rate of decline of Under5 mortality rate was faster in India than the global average and the narrowing of the rural - urban gap in child mortality is reflective of Government of India's continued commitment to serve children by establishing 'a culture of care' –from addressing the health of mothers to infants to children to adolescents.

We have therefore in UNICEF, a trusted and reliable partner, who we are sure, would continue to place children at the heart of achieving the 'future we want', as we agreed to in Rio. As a country that has one of the longest relationships with UNICEF and with home to the largest number of children in the world, we have an abiding interest in UNICEF's success and its efforts in ending preventing all preventable child deaths.

As home to one fifth of the children in the world, we are steadfastly committed to ensuring protective and nurturing environments for children to reach their full potential. We would like to once again express our sincere appreciation for UNICEF's efforts in fulfilling our common vision of an early realisation of children friendly environments universally. I thank you, Mr. President.

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