



Statement by Mr. Bhagwant Bishnoi, Counsellor on Agenda Item 3: Annual Report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council at First Regular session 2004 of the UNICEF Executive Board on January 19, 2004

Mr. President,

We congratulate you and your colleagues on the Bureau on your election, and assure you of our cooperation. We also thank the outgoing Bureau on the leadership which they provided during the course of 2003. We thank the Executive Director for the report which we have before us. We attach importance to the implementation of decisions taken by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on operational activities and have perused this report with interest.

We are pleased to note that efforts to increase diversity in the pool of resident coordinators have yielded results. The Executive Director's report refers to this as possibly a 'zero sum' solution; because improvement in the diversity of resident coordinators can result in depleted diversity in nominating agencies. This un-intended effect can, however, be checked. We would strongly support efforts to address gender and North/South imbalances in the staff of the Funds and Programmes. We would request UNICEF for figures which would allow us to gain an appreciation of the dimension of the issue. Perhaps, an informal briefing would also be useful.

We are happy to learn from the Executive Director's report that there has been a notable improvement in the quality of the Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). The earlier uneven quality of the CCAs and UNDAFs and the 'mixed results' obtained from the external evaluation conducted in 2001 explain the concern expressed in the last triennial comprehensive policy review conducted by the General Assembly. In the view of our delegation, it is full government participation and leadership at all stages of the development of UNDAF which provides it with the stamp of quality.

We note with interest the work being undertaken by UNICEF with regard to the Millennium + 5 Review. Ado Vaher has also touched upon this. We understand from the Report that the review would focus on three clusters: peace and security, human rights and governance, and environment and development and that one of UNICEF's objectives is to ensure a high level of country input. We would be happy to collaborate with UNICEF towards this objective and would look forward to further discussion, perhaps bilaterally, on

the subject. We would emphasize, at the same time, the importance of UNICEF's actions being within its mandate.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed that national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of the UN's operational activities for development. Our delegation appreciates the increased coordination which results from the work done by the UN Development Group (UNDG). We would, at the same time, like to caution that this should not lead to overstandardization, ignoring the specificities of national plans and priorities.

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