

Statement by Mrs Diedre Mills on the Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund: Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council, 19 January 2004

Let me from the outset express warmest congratulations to you Mr President and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We are confident that under your able leadership the work of the Board will be conducted in a most efficient and effective manner. We also wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Staehelin of Switzerland and the other members of the Bureau for the able manner in which they guided the work of the Executive Board in 2003.

My delegation joins in thanking the Executive Director for the report which now forms the basis of the deliberations of the Board and in applauding the efforts aimed at ensuring a more detailed presentation and analysis of the work of the Organisation. We are particularly pleased with the attention being given to strengthening national, sub-national and local capacities in such key areas as addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in ensuring gender mainstreaming in UNICEF programmes and activities, especially since this focus acknowledges the crucial role which national commissions and NGOs can play in advancing the implementation of policies related to children's and women's rights. The recognition that capacity-building interventions have to embrace flexible programming approaches as well as appropriate training and information management at all levels of government is worthy of continued support.

We also commend ongoing efforts aimed at improving the quality of CCAs and UNDAFs, both in terms of products and processes, as well as the significant strides made with respect to the simplification and harmonization of operational policies, notwithstanding the numerous challenges identified throughout the report. It is our hope that the progress made to date will be enhanced in the years ahead.

The efforts made to ensure that the principles of universality and country driven programmes are upheld remain an integral part of advancing our efforts in achieving the priorities of the MTSP. We are confident that the continued emphasis on national execution and UNICEF's focus on actions and impact at the country level will ensure more meaningful results in the years to come. It is clear, however, that greater efforts will be needed to assist in strengthening national statistical capacities and in supporting governments in the implementation of the agreed goals and targets.

Jamaica is pleased with the lead role that UNICEF, continues to play in the development of a system-wide framework for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and the outcome documents of international conferences and the General Assembly Special Session on Children. UNICEF's role in the process of updating and improving the guidance as well as the support provided to UN country teams merits special

commendation. Real progress, however, will require concerted efforts to mobilize required resources, to develop partnerships and to support governments in their national and sub-national reviews, given the range of issues and stakeholders embodied in this overall process. It is our hope that the work of the Organisation will be guided by these concerns as we draw closer to the 2005 comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and to the end of the 2002-2005 MTSP period.