

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. CHIMBINDI ON THE OPENING SESSION OF UNICEF'S FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD: 8 FEBRUARY 2022

The President of the Executive Board - H.E. Rodrigo A. Carazo

Fellow Board Members

The Executive Director, Ms. Catherine Russell

Distinguished delegates

Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, for your election to President of the Board, and for presiding over this first Regular Session of the Board for 2022. We are confident that your wisdom and experience will lead to successful deliberations and providing oversight and guidance to UNICEF.

Allow me to also welcome Ms. Catherine Russell, the new Executive Director, on her appointment. We appreciate the fact that she brings immense experience and knowledge to UNICEF, given her dedication to the promotion of the welfare of children. You can count on the full support of my delegation.

Mr. president,

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how unprepared we are for unforeseen shocks. The resultant economic downturn has particularly negatively impacted developing countries, triggering multidimensional vulnerabilities within countries. Many of our developmental targets and goals have been missed, with children and women being disproportionately affected by the pandemic. School closures and limited connectivity due to poor ICT infrastructure meant learning from home has been a privilege for a select few, as the majority of children do not access to internet and devices. Health service delivery has, equally, been impacted by the pandemic, at a

time the services were most needed. This, inter alia, included immunization, nutrition and sanitation programmes for children.

We appreciate the work that UNICEF has done during this difficult period, remaining operational in prohibitive circumstances. This demonstrated the need for an ever a nimble and fit for purpose UNICEF. My delegation welcomes the proposal to create the post of an Assistant Secretary-General, to head the Global COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Inter-Agency Coordination Structure. We are confident that through the Coordination Structure, UNICEF will further enhance its capacity to promote equitable access to life saving vaccines to developing countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that building resilience against shocks is an imperative. In that regard, over and above the reports that we receive on UNICEF's responses to the pandemic, my delegation would appreciate a report on UNICEF's preparedness for emerging challenges and increasing global shocks, which would be a true indicator that we are emerging from the pandemic, not only stronger and more resilient, but wiser.

In conclusion, let me, once again, express our appreciation to you Mr. President, and hope that under your stewardship, we will have fruitful deliberations. We have millions of children worldwide who bank on this Board to create an enabling environment for a healthy, safe and empowered childhood. We owe it to them to do our best to safeguard their wellbeing and their future. History will judge us harshly if we fail to live up to our responsibilities.

I thank you