

**Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant S Bishnoi,  
Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations  
at the First Regular Session 2013 of the Executive Board of UNICEF  
on February 04, 2014**

**Mr. President**, permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the Bureau. I wish you all success in your task.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the outgoing Bureau, for their commendable role in guiding the work of the Board last year. I also express appreciation to My felicitations to the Executive Director for his insightful statement and well crafted reports on UNICEF's Gender Action Plan, 2014- 2017, as well as, for the exemplary work done by UNICEF in humanitarian situations.

Mr. President, I cannot but begin by reporting to you a very important success story on our national front. As of today, India has been three years without a single case of the polio, which means we are now officially “polio-free.”

This achievement is one of the most impressive accomplishments in global health, **ever**. Five years ago, we were home to more than half of the world’s new polio cases. Health experts had then predicted, that India would be the last place on earth to end polio. But the Government of India, with help from the organizations that make up the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, including UNICEF, launched an all-out effort to stop the disease. We deployed 2 million vaccinators to reach children who had never before been reached with polio vaccines or any other health services—children who live in flooded regions or hard-to-find rural towns, including even those, who are regularly in-transit with their families. Today our victory has galvanized the global health community to re affirm their commitment to achieving a polio-free world by 2018.

Coming to the substance of agenda items for consideration before the Board today. Mr. President, we have noted with appreciation UNICEF's Gender Action Plan for 2014 – 2017. In this regard we have just one submission to offer. We would request UNICEF to consider focusing a bit more , on an idea which has not yet been fully tapped to its full potential, but has the power to significantly transform the narrative of empowering the girl child in developing countries. Using enabling technologies, can be a game changer if harnessed and applied to its full potential. We would therefore request UNICEF to incorporate within its gender action plan, a special focus on using enabling technologies such as information and communication technologies for the benefit of the girl child, so that they we are able to provide for their all round growth and a truly empowered well being.

In this regard, we also welcome the 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. These investments are critical in

breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and would help in creating more stable societies and promoting sustained economic growth.

**Another** aspect on which we would like to seek your attention Mr. President, is leveraging South South cooperation for the larger benefit of children in the developing world. Even though South South Cooperation is being increasingly 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. Countries of the South, including India, have several ongoing initiatives including our joint initiative with Brazil and South Africa, under the IBSA Fund.

Along with UNICEF, we co-hosted the 2nd High Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific in New Delhi, from 23 to 25 October 2013. The ambitious New Delhi Declaration on SSC for child rights in Asia and the Pacific, provides us with an important framework for the path ahead. We look forward to UNICEF continuing to implement the outcomes of the New Delhi Declaration, in partnership with countries of the South, to complement them in achieving their goals, especially in those projects which have an explicit 'children friendly' focus.

Finally, Mr. President, The Government of India and the UNICEF country programme of cooperation is one of the largest and most diverse UNICEF supported country programmes globally. In this regard, I wish to inform the Board that the Government of India **has already pledged US \$900,000** to UNICEF for the year 2014. The announcement to this effect was made by India at the 2013 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, last year. We would be committing the same at the pledging conference on Thursday.

To conclude, the Executive Board Meeting is timely and important as it provides an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of children all over the world. 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 the early realisation of children friendly environments universally.

**I thank you, Mr. President.**

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