Statement by
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As the Development Committee meets, global economic prospects remain subdued. Inequalities continue to affect all dimensions of human life, while fragility and conflict still undermine the well-being of too many. Children everywhere remain among the most vulnerable. At the same time, we know that healthy and prosperous economies start with healthy children born to healthy women.1

**Investing in the foundations of future growth and prosperity**

Realizing child rights to health, education and protection is our common duty. It is also a critical investment in the foundation of future growth and prosperity. Global investments in maternal, newborn and child survival are generating significant returns in terms of the numbers of lives saved. Over the past 22 years, the world has saved around 90 million lives that might otherwise have been lost had mortality rates remained at the 1990 levels. The global under-five mortality rate roughly halved, falling from an estimated 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012.

As impressive as these gains are, they are not enough to meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4 – the global promise to cut the rate of under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015. If current trends continue, the world will not meet MDG 4 until 2028 – 13 years after the 2015 deadline. As many as 35 million more children could die between 2015 and 2028, mostly from preventable causes. This was the impetus behind the launch of Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed – a global movement to end preventable child deaths, now signed by over 175 governments. These governments have pledged to redouble efforts to meet MDG 4 and to sustain progress beyond 2015.

Last month, the World Bank Group, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Norway, and UNICEF announced a collective total of $1.15 billion in funding over the next three years to ensure that essential services and medicines reach women and children in developing countries with the highest burdens of maternal and child deaths. In a similar spirit, all development partners must work together to deliver concrete results towards all MDGs.

Yesterday, we celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child. Let us make sure that we do not limit it to one day. Let us make every day the day of the girl because evidence shows that investing in girls is laying the foundation for stronger economies and a better future for all.

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1. *WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO ACHIEVE BOTH HEALTHY CHILDREN AND HEALTHY ECONOMIES? WORLD BANK GROUP SEMINAR. 11 OCTOBER 2013*
The IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde recently pointed out that “by dismissing the contribution of women [to the economy], we end up with lower income per capital – as much as 27 percent in some regions – and with lower quality lives.”\(^2\) Harnessing women’s full contribution to society starts with investing in girls, their education and well-being. Girls’ education, especially at the secondary level, is a consistent positive determinant of every development outcome, from lower mortality and fertility, to reduced poverty and enhanced equity. Yet, many girls, particularly the most marginalized, continue to be deprived of this basic right and are denied access to education because of safety-related, financial, and cultural barriers.

As we accelerate progress towards internationally agreed goals and define the post-2015 development agenda, it is critical that innovation is harnessed to develop solutions for improving girls’ education. Innovations in technology, partnerships, policies, community mobilization, and most of all, the engagement of young people themselves, can be catalyzing forces for every girl, and every child, to receive an education commensurate with the challenges of the 21st century.

**A “next generation World Bank” for the next generation**

The World Bank Group’s new strategy to eradicate extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity is an opportunity for a “next generation World Bank” which serves the next generation, starting with today’s children.

The aim of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 is important for children as they bear a disproportionate risk of being extremely poor. Children are also over-represented in the bottom 40 per cent of the population in the majority of developing countries. Hence, promoting shared prosperity will require adequate attention to the well-being of children. Such efforts should include, for example, helping governments clearly articulate child-sensitive objectives in their Poverty Reduction Strategies and other strategic plans to capture children’s needs and the returns on growth from investments in child nutrition, health, education and protection. Children-specific indicators should be important markers in the monitoring and reporting on progress towards poverty eradication and shared prosperity at national and international levels.

Improving the well-being of children today leads to more prosperous generations in the future. A growing body of evidence shows that a substantial degree of poverty persists across generations. The context in which children are born largely determine the opportunities they face throughout their lifetime. The earliest years of childhood are the most critical for growth and development and, if neglected, can lead to irreversible and lifelong impact on capabilities, including poor health, stunting, reduced brain development and poor learning. Investing in today’s children, particularly in their earliest years, can end intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage. Fostering such investments requires removing financial, institutional and other barriers to the equitable provision of social services, i.e., promoting equitable public financial management.

Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children.\(^3\) Strengthening children’s ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens, contributing fully to their families and societies is a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and enhance

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intergenerational equity. This is why children’s rights and well-being should remain at the heart of our common post-2015 development agenda.

**Delivering development solutions for the most vulnerable, together**

Fragile and conflict-affected states have the longest and hardest way to go in achieving development goals. It is estimated that by 2025 five-sixths of the world’s poor will live in Africa, a continent suffering from some of the most intractable conflicts. Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty in these challenging contexts requires working together to better support governments’ capacities to deliver services for all. UNICEF welcomes the World Bank Group strategy’s emphasis on partnering with the United Nations in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Today the need is nowhere more apparent than in Syria and neighboring countries. Already in August we passed a grim milestone – the one millionth Syrian refugee child fleeing the conflict. Current estimates indicate that more than 4.5 million children remain at particular risk inside Syria. Hundreds of thousands of children have witnessed – or been the victims of – horrifying violence. Things no child should see or endure. With no end in sight to the violence in Syria, the risk is growing that today’s children will become a lost generation – shaped only by conflict, displacement, distrust, and deeper and deeper vulnerability. A whole generation’s future is at stake. Together with partners, UNICEF has developed a strategy for children affected by the Syria crisis to address the gravity of the education and child protection crisis facing children both inside and outside Syria. The strategy aims at reversing current trends before they become irreversible. Working together with all partners and doing everything we can to avert a lost generation is our moral obligation and an investment in the shared prosperity of the region and the world of tomorrow.

**Conclusion**

As fragilities arise and global economic indicators fluctuate, our collective commitment to child rights and well-being should not waver. It is not only right to invest in children, it is also sound economics. When all children have access to good health, education, and nutrition, and are protected from abuse, violence and exploitation, their unlocked potential can translate into gains, not only for individuals, but also for societies, economies and future generations.