**Statement of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)**

**At the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Geneva, 15-17 May 2019**

Your Excellency and Distinguished Colleagues

We would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting the Conference.

Disaster Risk Reduction is a priority for UNICEF and we appreciate the efforts undertaken to implement the Sendai Framework. The focus on disaster risk reduction is an important contribution to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Crises are becoming more frequent and more complex, lasting longer and affecting more people. The impact of conflict, disasters and climate change is displacing children, trapping them behind conflict lines, and putting them at risk of disease, violence and exploitation.

As our Executive Director, Henrietta Fore recently said: “We are witnessing a worrisome trend. Cyclones, droughts and other extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity. As we have seen in recent months, poorer countries and communities are disproportionately affected. For children who are already vulnerable, the impact can be devastating.”

In Mozambique, for example, more than 120,000 children were affected by Cyclone Kenneth, the strongest storm Mozambique has ever recorded. At least 400 schools were damaged or destroyed, affecting over 40,000 schoolchildren. This can have a dramatic impact on a child's education and on her/his future.

Children are affected by disasters in myriad ways – death or injury, and the threat of disease caused by disrupted access to basic services such as health, nutrition, safe water and sanitation. By missing out on education, they are robbed of the opportunity to grow and nurture their minds during critical developmental years. Children can further suffer from psychological trauma, or face exploitation, violence, abuse, displacement, and separation from their caregivers. All of these effects have long-term consequences, not only for the children themselves, but for generations to come.

There is no doubt that children are among the most vulnerable to hazards. What is less recognized is that children and youth have an important role to play in reducing risk. Girls and boys, have proven capable of mapping the hazards they face, identifying those people most at risk and advocating for change. They can play an even more significant role where they are part of national and community plans and processes. We have heard examples of this, including from Ferina and Nuri from Indonesia, over the last few days. This, colleagues, is inclusion.

Since Sendai UNICEF has worked with its government, UN and NGO partners to promote the following:

* Sound multi-hazard risk assessments, based on data that is inclusive and is disaggregated by age, gender and disability.
* Primary health care systems that are informed by an analysis of disaster risk including the risk of epidemics and pandemics, are decentralized and community-based so they not only reduce vulnerability related to health and nutrition, but are resilient and more sustainable themselves.
* Water, sanitation and hygiene services that consider all risks, including those additional risks posed by climate change, and build the adaptive capacity of communities themselves to deal with shocks and stress.
* A recognition of the special role that schools and education play in reducing disaster risk. This includes support to scale up structural safety of schools, emergency preparedness, and knowledge and education, as three pillars of comprehensive school safety.
* Social protection and safety net measures that are available to those most at risk to mitigate the impacts of floods, droughts and other shocks. UNICEF is also helping to strengthen these systems to be used, where necessary, as a means of providing cash for more effective and appropriate humanitarian response.

UNICEF is committed to strengthening the resilience of all girls and boys to all shocks. It is also committed to strengthening the systems they require to flourish. Among other things, this will require better integration of humanitarian and development work, focused on the underlying drivers of risk. UNICEF will also continue to support the development of capacities for preparedness and effective response which lies at the heart of disaster risk reduction.

In supporting partners to deliver on the SDG’s UNICEF will promote, as appropriate, a multi-hazard approach linking measures to address disasters, climate change, environmental degradation and conflict.

Last but certainly not least, as disaster risk and climate change are intergenerational issues, UNICEF will continue to work with its partners to promote the participation and rights of all young people and women, in DRR and their vital role in strengthening resilience.