Mr. President,

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you very much for giving the floor and please accept our appreciation for your able stewardship of the Executive Board. We have also carefully heard the Executive Director.

Mr. President,

The adverse impacts of the global economic and financial crisis are increasingly visible. The forecast of sharp decline in UNICEF’s total income by 14% from US $ 3.3bn to US $ 2.9 billion in 2009 reaffirms this trend. More worrisome are the projections that its finances will remain under considerable pressure in the medium-to-long term, and the income projections and programme expenditure will remain below the 2008 levels during the next 3-4 years.

We apprehend that lack of adequate funding could hold back or even reverse the gains made so far towards the realization of Millennium Development Goals. Concerted efforts are required in health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene education; and education sectors as per the need of Member states in accordance with principles of national ownership and leadership, if the Millennium Development Goals are to be attained by 2015. UNICEF must, therefore, step up its efforts to have access to enhanced funding and to increase its operational efficiencies so as to ensure better utilization of funds.
We welcome the presentation of the budget proposal for the 2010-2011 biennium in the Results Based Budget format. We would encourage UNICEF to undertake further efforts towards enhanced accountability and greater efficiency in programme implementation. We have taken note of UNICEF’s efforts to bring down a modest decrease in support budget as a percentage of total resources from 11.9% to 11.5% in the next biennial support budget. However, we are concerned that the contribution of regular resources to the total income will further decline during the next biennium, which would not be conducive to UNICEF’s efforts to align itself with the priorities indentified in the strategic plan.

Mr. President,

India has been making a steady progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the global economic slowdown, Government of India has accorded very high priority to education and health sectors, and has enhanced allocation by 19% to social sector during the current financial year.

India’s Eleventh Plan recognizes that the “Development of Children is at the Centre of the Plan.” This abiding policy commitment to an integrated approach to enhancing young child survival, growth, development and early learning is being translated into action through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Universalization with Quality Initiative. ICDS is today the world’s largest early child development programme reaching out to over 78 million young children and pregnant and lactating mothers. There is added emphasis on convergence of services under various schemes and programmes viz. health, early childhood education, safe drinking water so as to achieve the desired impact.

The Government has redoubled its commitment and support to the health sector, particularly the in-accessed populace, through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) launched in 2005. The Mission is an articulation of the commitment of the Government to raise public spending on Health to 2-3% of GDP by 2012.

Mr. President,

UNICEF runs one of its largest programmes in India and has been associated with India’s development efforts for many decades. As we embark on redouble efforts for the well-being of the youngest members of our population, we count on UNICEF to be strongly supportive of our national endeavours and work in close cooperation with our Government and its agencies.

Thank you, Mr. President.