



UNICEF statement for Agenda Point 20.1 “Reform of the global health architecture and the UN80 Initiative” at the WHA 79

21 May 2026

President, Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies,

Global health investments and coordinated action with partners, governments, and communities have demonstrated what is possible. Through effective financing, evidence-based policies, and collective commitment, millions of children’s lives have been saved. Child mortality has declined dramatically, yet 4.9 million children under the age of five and over 1 million adolescents still die every year.

Children have a right to health, and the current and next generation deserve a global health architecture that is fit for purpose — one that can continue to deliver results for children in a changing and increasingly complex world.

For this reason, UNICEF welcomes the proposed WHO-hosted joint process to reform the global health architecture. UNICEF will work to ensure these discussions align with the UN80 process and broader system-wide reform efforts. With more than 50 per cent of under-five mortality now occurring in humanitarian and fragile settings, it is essential that global health reform is aligned with humanitarian reform.

Public health emergency preparedness and response must also place children at the center. Outbreaks — including cholera, measles, and mpox — have demonstrated how quickly children can face disproportionate risks through disrupted immunization, malnutrition, interrupted learning, and reduced access to essential services.

UNICEF will engage constructively to ensure maternal, newborn, and child health remains central to these efforts, and that strong, resilient primary health care systems are at the core of delivering equitable and sustainable results for every child.