**IDDRSI Steering Committee Meeting**

Elizabeth Allen

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Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for permitting me a few minutes to address you all today.

We are in the midst of an incredibly difficult, heartbreaking moment globally as war and environmental disasters are inflicting staggering losses on young lives.

As the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF has a universal mandate to protect the rights of children everywhere. We are both a humanitarian and development agency.

Practically speaking, what that means is while we provide lifesaving support to children in emergencies, we also keep our eyes focused on the day-after, when the worst of a crisis subsides and the need for investments in development and re-building emerge.

The environmental situation in the IGAD region has blurred some of the more traditional distinctions between emergencies and the day-after, between humanitarian and development silos.

For years, different parts of the IGAD region have oscillated between severe droughts and catastrophic flooding, with some of the hardest hit areas lurching from crisis to crisis. While humanitarian funding can provide essential lifesaving support, we need more investments in long-term resilience – especially in deep groundwater infrastructure – to protect people from the worst effects of these protracted emergencies.

During the most recent drought crisis in the Horn of Africa, UNICEF and other partners noticed that while we were able to mobilize funding for humanitarian relief, investments in development and long-term resilience were harder to secure.

This is a real problem for the IGAD region.

As some of you may know, UNICEF has a Children’s Climate Risk Index that measures the exposure of children around the world to environmental shocks and the ability of children to access the social services they need to protect themselves from the worst effects of these shocks.

Right now, environmental emergencies have rendered a majority of IGAD member states among the highest-risk places on earth for children due to climate change.

While climate change has often been classified as a “slow-onset emergency,” it is no longer slow-onset in our region. We need funding that will make social systems and infrastructure more resilient and capable of protecting families and communities from these protracted crises.

Fortunately, we see some promising developments on the horizon. We are currently witnessing real momentum for climate financing, especially within the development banks. And this past September, the AU convened the first-ever Africa Climate Summit, which focused not only on the need for loss-and-damage funding, but also financing that will help economies grow on the continent. Protecting children and communities from the worst effects of climate change is not in opposition to shared prosperity and economic growth. These goals go hand-in-hand.

Later on today, you will hear from two of UNICEF’s partners – one at FAO and one with the Inter-Agency Working Group, which is a regional platform of NGOs working in Eastern and Central Africa. One thing we recognized as partners was that we need to focus more on coordination and collaboration when it comes to addressing recurring crises like what we’re seeing in the Horn of Africa.

We’ve drafted a call-to-action for resilience-building and systems strengthening that will guide our engagements with key strategic partners. IGAD – and especially the IDDRSI platform -- remains one of our most critical and important partners in that work.

Let me conclude by harkening back to the Africa Climate Summit.

One of the important messages communicated by young people at the Summit was the idea of partnerships. When it comes to climate, **we share more than a common goal**. We are truly **on the same path**, and we will rise or fall together.

On behalf of UNICEF, it is an honor to be here today, and **we** **look forward to rising** **with all of you in the months and years to come.**

Thank you.

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