Ms. Catherine Russell,
Executive Director United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Statement on the launch of the UN-Water System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

UN Agencies have been tasked by Member States to strengthen inter-agency coordination and alignment for water and sanitation. In response, UNICEF actively supported the development of a UN system-wide strategy where agency principals and staff work closely together to achieve the goal of safe water and sanitation for all. We see this strategy as key to increasing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and learning across the UN System.

The sustainable management of water resources is key to ensuring the continuity of water services to children affected by floods, droughts, and cyclones. UNICEF’s recent Sustainability and Action Plan is grounded in children’s right to live in a clean and safe environment – including the 450 million children who live in water scares areas without access to safe drinking water.

Conflict, climate change and fragility are the “new normal”. Stronger partnerships will be critical to overcoming these challenges and accelerating progress towards reaching SDG6.

Working with governments to increase access to water, sanitation, and hygiene – and to make these systems more resilient – is core to our mandate. UNICEF is working with other UN Agencies to implement the strategy, including in some of the most challenging settings around the world. We are also calling on Member States to strengthen governance, policy and finance to improve the capacity and sustainability of WASH systems.

UNICEF already partners and coordinates with other agencies on water resource management, multipurpose use of water in communities, and disaster risk reduction. For many years WHO and UNICEF have been providing data and statistics on the global WASH progress and the state of WASH systems through the Joint Monitoring Programme and the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water.

Both are inspiring examples of how close partnerships between UN Agencies delivering together, building on agencies’ mandates and added value, can deliver much needed global public goods to guide countries in their investments in WASH.