



**Executive Board of the  
United Nations Development  
Programme, the United Nations  
Population Fund and the United  
Nations Office for Project Services**

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**Annual session 2020**

1 to 5 June 2020, New York

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Organizational matters**

**Report of the first regular session 2020  
(3 to 6 February 2020, New York)**

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## I. Organizational matters

1. The first regular session 2020 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 3 to 6 February 2020. The newly elected President of the Board welcomed all delegations and thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their leadership and commitment to the work of the Board in 2019. He congratulated the new members of the Bureau on their election.

2. In accordance with rule 7 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board, the Board elected the following members of the Bureau for 2020:

President:	H.E. Mr. Walton Webson	(Antigua and Barbuda)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov	(Bulgaria)
Vice-President:	H.E. Ms. Anna-Karin Enestrom	(Sweden)
Vice-President:	H.E. Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza	(Rwanda)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Mansour Ayyad Alotaibi	(Kuwait)

3. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its first regular session 2020 (DP/2020/L.1), and approved the report of the second regular session 2019 (DP/2020/1). The Board adopted the annual workplan for 2020 (DP/2020/CRP.1) and approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2020.

4. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2019 appeared in document DP/2020/2, available on the [UNDP](#) and [UNFPA](#) websites.

5. The Executive Board agreed to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2020:

Annual session 2020	1 to 5 June 2020 (New York)
Second regular session 2020:	31 August to 4 September 2020

### Statement by the President of the Board

6. In his opening address, the President of the Board said he would ensure Board engagements were pragmatic and results-oriented, setting the tone for Board work in 2020. Member States had to keep in mind how Board deliberations allowed the organizations to provide critical services for those most in need. He stressed that 2020 was an important year, 10 years from the deadline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Board members had to continue their active, constructive dialogue with UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on development priorities. The Board and the organizations had to remain perceptive, nimble, focused and innovative when engaging on issues such as the midterm review of the organizations' strategic plans and the new quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system 2020.

7. The President was encouraged by the three organizations' commitment to strengthening United Nations coherence, transparency and accountability. Beginning with the first regular session 2020, he would demonstrate his commitment to rallying a spirit of teamwork between the Board and the organizations. He encouraged continued intersessional dialogue, confident it would promote stronger partnership, guidance and sharing of experience on strategic issues of the common agenda and consensual decision-making. To promote greater dialogue between the organizations and the Board, he would strengthen his bridging role and facilitate open, honest communication, including a roadmap for conclusion of discussions on working methods. He planned to revive deliberations with the Presidents of the other Executive Boards and ensure coherence in discussions. He would engage the heads of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies in frequent meetings to enable open, frank communications on Board issues. He urged Member States to work in a common spirit to devise impactful, meaningful decisions.

## Joint segment

### II. Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

8. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, introduced the report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018 for UNDP (DP/2020/3). The Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, introduced the UNFPA report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018 (DP/FPA/2020/1). The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, introduced the UNOPS report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018 (DP/OPS/2020/1). Also tabled was the report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018 for the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (DP/2020/4).

9. In overall comments, Board members welcomed the unqualified audit opinions each organization received for 2018, while noting room for improvement remained. They reemphasized the importance of preventative actions, quality assurance, ethics awareness-raising and protection of whistle-blowers. They also welcomed technology investments to facilitate risk management, advance cost savings from efficient procurement, ensure higher compliance to internal control frameworks, and reduce vulnerability to human error. They requested that the Board of Auditors in future reports include pertinent findings from country visits. One delegation noted it would be useful to include in the existing reporting lines information on the assessment of trainings that the agencies' staff attend.

#### *UNDP*

10. Board members welcomed the reduction in new audit recommendations for 2018 compared to 2017, and in audit recommendations ranked 'high priority'. They encouraged UNDP to continue to strengthen its top seven audit-related management priorities, particularly those not ranked 'on target', and expressed appreciation for its holistic approach to recurring audit issues. They noted that in 2018 there were a number of new audit recommendations concerning human resources management. In addition, they underscored the audit recommendations relating to the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) and programme and project management needed improvement, despite reported progress. They also noted there were challenges in projects funded through government cost-sharing and requested clarity on strategies to address them. They encouraged UNDP to strengthen staff awareness of the internal control framework, especially at country level, and foster stringent compliance with UNDP accountability mechanisms. They expected UNDP initiatives, such as the People for 2030 strategy, the clustering of transactional activities, and technology investments in procurement, to have an impact in addressing audit-related priorities. The group stressed that competitive recruitment processes should not be undermined and, while recognizing the need for rapid recruitment in challenging situations, expressed concern with the audit recommendation on improper use of exceptions for direct contracting and waiving of competitive recruitment processes; they requested details of how UNDP would seek to refine the internal control framework and policies related to workforce/personnel management.

#### *UNCDF*

11. Board members welcomed the UNCDF unqualified audit report for 2018 and the effective closing of audit recommendations from previous periods.

#### *UNFPA*

12. Board members welcomed the reduced number of audit recommendations for 2018 compared to 2017 and supported the Fund's continued efforts to close outstanding audit recommendations. They expressed concern that 8 of 12 audit recommendations from previous audits were still in progress of implementation. They encouraged the Board of Auditors to continue to monitor and work with management to ensure audit recommendations were fully

implemented and closed. They welcomed the Fund's finalization and roll-out of its enterprise risk management policy, and requested details on its exact timeline and indication of anticipated barriers to its roll-out. They welcomed the completion of the design of the UNFPA last-mile assurance process and training programme, as well as the completion of the last-mile audits of its 16 largest implementing partners; they requested details on how lessons learned would inform country-level risk management processes. Reiterating the importance of management's role to ensure effective risk management and control, they requested an update on management's efforts to strengthen its monitoring role to ensure improvements were solid and long lasting.

#### *UNOPS*

13. Board members welcomed UNOPS progress in closing outstanding audit recommendations in 2018, while noting the large increase in new recommendations for 2018 compared to 2017, related mostly to financial management processes, asset valuation and depreciation procedures. Noting that four of the new recommendations related to oneUNOPS, they expressed concern in particular with the lack of segregation of duties for procurement processes, a high-risk area of financial mismanagement and fraud. They reiterated the need for UNOPS to develop a strategy to use its excess reserve, as pointed out by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors during consecutive years, and looked forward to an update in line with Executive Board decision 2019/20. They supported the recommendation to make gender mainstreaming an intrinsic part of project management and welcomed the new guidelines for gender mainstreaming in projects and its inclusion in oneUNOPS. They encouraged UNOPS to continue to develop oneUNOPS to reduce risks and address weaknesses identified in the segregation of duties.

#### *Response*

14. In response, the Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, highlighted that UNFPA would use its enterprise resource planning system to address pending recommendations, monitor exceptions and increase transparency, including for procurement. The enterprise resource planning system would serve to fully track the planning-to-reporting cycle of programmes, which was a major innovation. She underscored that while it would roll out its risk management policy in the second quarter 2020 UNFPA already had a risk management strategy in place, which the policy formalized; the Fund would ensure all staff were familiarized with the new policy to avoid barriers to implementation.

15. The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, confirmed that UNOPS had been addressing weaknesses in its inventory and asset valuation, revising processes and templates to ensure users inputted updated information on a timely basis. UNOPS was rolling out a new internal control framework in 2020 that would address lack of segregation of duties in procurement. The organization looked forward to addressing its excess reserve at the annual session 2020, in accordance with decision 2019/20.

16. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, highlighted that government cost-sharing was an important financing source and remained a top corporate priority, which it addressed on a project specific basis. UNDP had also adopted a revised whistle-blower policy that it was rolling out across the organization. She noted that the enterprise risk management escalation process moved from project to programme to country to regional levels before reaching the corporate-level enterprise risk management committee. Triggers that set off the escalation process included financial management, security, representational risk, an increase in programme size and crisis issues. On the human resources front, UNDP was in the process of revising its policies and guidelines for the use of professional P6 and P7 grade posts, and reviewing how it made strategic placements and how best to adjust contract modalities and clarify roles and responsibilities.

17. The Board adopted decision 2020/1 on the reports of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018.

### III. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

18. The Director, Division for Management Services, UNFPA, and the Deputy Director and Chief Finance Officer, UNDP, presented the joint preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy (DP/FPA/ICEF-UNW/CRP.1).

19. A group of delegations welcomed the joint adoption of the harmonized cost recovery policy, which they noted was a model for the United Nations development system. They encouraged the organizations to continue to pursue a harmonized approach in rates, cost classification and methodology based on the 2013 policy, to incentivize their collaboration and align with United Nations reform. They welcomed the improved alignment of cost classification categories, and the suggested changes. They also welcomed the inclusion of detailed information on the financial impact of differentiated rates, and the disaggregated presentation by agency and category; they requested further disaggregated data in future annual financial reports. They highlighted that full-cost recovery remained crucial to avoiding cross-subsidization, even within the framework of a harmonized approach. They strongly encouraged the organizations to further illustrate options to close remaining loopholes on waivers, differentiated rates and compliance. Stressing that the organizations should reduce the number of waivers, they expected the subsequent draft to propose a waiver policy that upheld transparency and harmonization principles. They sought evidence-based options to align and adjust differentiated rates, remove potential distortive effects, and create incentives for favourable funding, as called for in the Funding Compact. Urging greater compliance with the existing and revised cost-recovery policy, they welcomed suggestions on how to keep individual donors from undermining full-cost recovery. They requested a policy document that comprehensively and transparently presented information related to cost-recovery classification, methodology and rates that included clear, mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive definitions of all cost categories. They encouraged further discussion in a joint informal consultation prior to the annual session 2020, with a draft policy presented during the preparatory phase of the annual session 2020.

20. Other delegations were pleased the cost categories increased the level of transparency and demonstrated co-auditing practices. They reiterated that the reform's main goal was to strengthen inter-agency work, remove competition for resources, and increase pooling of funds and cooperation. They looked forward to a balanced budget that contributed to effective financing of development activities and minimized cross-subsidization. Recognizing that the nominal scale for UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was lower than 8 per cent and the surplus obtained was used to finance institutional expenditures, they requested details on how such funds were utilized. They sought information on resources the organizations would use to pay increased contributions to coordination activities. They underscored the importance of ending the practice of differentiated rate scales, especially for legacy agreements, adding that all donors should pay the same rate and level.

21. In response, the Deputy Director and Chief Finance Officer, UNDP, highlighted that the cost recovery principle sought to ensure core did not subsidize non-core resources; the organizations had demonstrated they did not use core to subsidize non-core resources, unless directed by the Board. The harmonized cost recovery rate, for example, did have the secondary effect of forcing certain organizations to use core to subsidize non-core to reach the 8 per cent rate required. That said, the harmonized rate had been effective in reducing competition and creating an enabling environment for collaboration, as called for by United Nations reform, and could serve as a model for the United Nations system once remaining wrinkles, due to differing mandates, were ironed out. Devising harmonized principles for granting waivers would likewise be beneficial, though they would have to be nimble enough to allow heads of organizations to continue to grant waivers in crisis moments. Getting a better sense of what additional information the Board required would help them devise waiver granting principles. He clarified that average cost recovery in fact aligned with the income the organizations received, which accounted for the

balanced budget, and did not imply a surplus; all income generated through cost recovery was used for management activities.

22. The Director, Division for Management Services, UNFPA, confirmed that United Nations coordination activities were fully funded from core resources, with funding for such activities doubled in 2019. He stressed that, while it was important to pursue harmonization, a fully harmonized cost recovery rate, in which there was no cross-subsidization, was difficult given the organizations' differing business models. Similarly, while the organizations aimed to limit the granting of waivers, their financial rules and regulations, as approved by the Board, gave the principals the authority to grant waivers. The organizations were ready to work with the Board to devise clearer guidance on waiver use, though it was important to keep in mind that the waivers granted to date were actually proportionally small compared to total organizational revenue.

23. The Executive Board took note of the joint preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy (DP/FPA/ICEF-UNW/CRP.1).

#### **IV. Working methods of the Executive Board**

24. The Secretary of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board gave an overview of three options presented in the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on Executive Board working methods, as requested in decision 2019/22. Also tabled for information purposes was the revised and harmonized guidelines on conducting individual and joint field visits, in response to decision 2019/16.

25. In collective and individual comments, Board members welcomed the inter-agency collaboration on harmonization and presentation of different annual work programme options. Any option, they said, should not negatively affect country programme cycles and implementation on the ground, and all topics included in Board session agendas should cover substantive issues. They underscored that ongoing efforts to improve working methods were meant to revitalize the governing bodies' governance; consensus among Member States was therefore key to implementing an action-oriented approach. Any meaningful improvements to the joint and individual meetings required flexibility and willingness on the part of Member States to review efficiencies of Board meetings while maintaining effectiveness of their oversight function. As such, the focus of discussions should not be on the number of Board sessions per year but rather on what the Board needed to do to fulfil its oversight role. They fully agreed with the need to respect organizations' distinct mandates under the purview of the different Executive Boards as the basis for a comprehensive approach to addressing the 2030 Agenda and the Goals.

26. Delegations had different positions on the three options. Some welcomed the proposed three options as a good basis for discussion; others requested further details. Many cautioned against creating 'asymmetric' oversight, in which some delegations would be unable to fully engage in Board work. In that view, option three was the least favourable since General Assembly resolution 40/243 prohibited meetings during the high-level meeting; engaging in an intergovernmental process to change legislation was not optimal. Others highlighted that moving items from one session to another by shortening or eliminating the second regular session did not necessarily improve effectiveness of their oversight role. Some supported the proposal to hold two Board sessions per year, commensurate with organizations' size, budget and roles, in line with other United Nations governance arrangements and as part of efforts to reduce costs, reroute savings to country teams, streamline a busy calendar, maximize participation, and alleviate pressure on smaller delegations. Others sought clarity on how changes would affect the timetable of official documentation to be issued in time for delegations to prepare for sessions.

27. Delegations emphasized that the joint meeting of the Boards was intended to be a forum to discuss agenda items of common relevance to all Boards and limit duplication, enhance coordination and allow Member States to address issues in a holistic manner. Some stated that decision-making authority should remain with the individual Boards – and not be transferred to

the joint meeting of the Boards. In that view, moving joint items to the joint meeting of the Boards was problematic because the joint meeting did not have decision-making authority. Others were open to exploring the advantages of giving decision-making authority to the joint meeting of the Boards in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Many delegations disagreed with the proposal to organize all second regular sessions of the different Boards back-to-back in one week of consolidated Board meetings, as it appeared to be conducive to the proposal of a ‘mega-Board’ that Member States had already disregarded.

28. Some delegations expressed a readiness to consider reconvening the core group on working methods, with the mandate to devise final options (based on the three options) that would allow the Board to take a decision at the second regular session 2020; others said that launching a new core working group would not succeed in achieving consensus. They requested further analysis on how proposed changes might affect each Board differently, including analysis from a budgetary viewpoint to determine how the proposed options might bring about savings.

29. In response, the Secretary of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board stated with regard to requests for further information that the secretariat would revert back to the Board following additional analysis, including on the cost of formal sessions and informal meetings. In terms of quantity versus quality, the Board could opt to reduce the number of informal meetings by deciding to allow only formal agenda items to be discussed during informal meetings. Similarly, the Board might consider tabling only decision-making items at its formal sessions. He assured Board members that the secretariat was working to ensure the country programme cycle was aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks. The secretariat would also work to ensure Board documents were issued in a timely manner so delegations could prepare for formal sessions.

30. The Chief, Executive Board Branch, UNFPA, highlighted that another issue to consider, should option two or three be operationalized, was when to present data-dependent reports, such as financial reports, which were often presented at the second regular session, to allow ample time to cull data and information the reports contained. Presenting financial reports at the annual session was nonetheless preferable to presenting them the following year at the first regular session, as it would lead to long lag times between the closing of books and discussions of financial reports.

31. The Partnership Advisor, UNOPS, pointed out that should the Board opt to remove the second regular session UNOPS would then submit the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement to the following first regular session. Likewise, UNOPS would present its midterm strategic review, traditionally submitted at the second regular session, to the annual session, keeping in mind that it would also have to address data availability concerns.

32. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/2 on the working methods of the Executive Board.

## **UNDP segment**

### **Statement by the Administrator and interactive dialogue**

*Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system*

#### **Statement by the Administrator**

33. In his address (available on the [UNDP website](#)), the Administrator highlighted that despite a complex, diverse global context in 2019 UNDP development performance against its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and six signature solutions was on track. Focused on implementation, UNDP continued to work with its partners to tackle some of the most complex, multidimensional, deep-rooted challenges of the decade. Those included inequality, climate change, and the root causes of migration and forced displacement. In that regard, the UNDP *Human Development Report*

2019 offered a new lens through which to understand why people were protesting and what could be done about it.

34. In 2019, UNDP had taken an integrated approach to tackling inequality, exclusion and multidimensional poverty by supporting parliaments to promote inclusion through effective civil society engagement for the Sustainable Development Goals and through strengthened human rights protection and promotion. UNDP had worked with some 90 countries to reform discriminatory laws and policies on HIV, tuberculosis and broader health issues that perpetuated exclusion and marginalization, while it promoted a more integrated approach to gender equality across the Goals. Internally, UNDP was one of the best performing United Nations organizations against the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

35. Through its Climate Promise 2019, UNDP was helping countries worldwide to enhance their nationally determined contributions while taking an integrated approach to climate issues when implementing its signature solutions. A new phase of the Climate Promise featured the launching in early 2020 of Mission 1.5, a mobile game that engaged people in climate solutions for their countries' nationally determined contributions. With financing from environmental and climate vertical funds, UNDP was engaged in 44 countries, helping them to avoid millions of tonnes of CO2 emissions and benefitting millions of people.

36. In 2019, UNDP continued to address the root causes of migration and forced displacement. At the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, UNDP set out three new targets to support the Global Compact on Refugees in 40 countries in the areas of local governance, rule of law and human rights; decent work for those on the move; and conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development. Given the cost-savings of prevention compared to humanitarian assistance, UNDP proposed a renewed offer on prevention that included income-generating activities during crises, scaling up subregional and multi-country initiatives to accelerate development and foster regional stability, including through the UNDP Africa Borderlands Programme.

37. Internally, UNDP had taken steps to ensure its business model was effective and efficient in supporting delivery, as it continued to strengthen and build current and new capacities. In 2019, UNDP was on track to balance the budget for the third consecutive year, marking financial stability and sustainability. Notably, regular (core) contributions, including multi-year commitments, rose for the second year in a row, and there was a significant increase to UNDP from pooled funds. UNDP had also received its fourteenth consecutive clean audit opinion from the United Nations Board of Auditors for 2018. Other internal innovations and efficiencies included: business service clustering in country offices and improved business operations strategies for country teams; launch of the new People for 2030 strategy, including a more inclusive, safer workplace; the Greening Moonshot initiative to reduce UNDP greenhouse gas emissions; setting up of the UNDP Accelerator Lab Network, part of its Global Policy Network; and the 2019 launch of the Finance Sector Hub to finance and support 'SDG Impact'.

38. UNDP remained fully committed to successful implementation of United Nations reform, as demonstrated by its active engagement in all reform aspects in 2019. In 2020, UNDP would continue to play a key role across all reform streams, including the Cooperation Framework, the management and accountability framework, and the regional and the multi-country office review, and continue as principal provider to the resident coordinator system. The challenge moving forward was for UNDP to remain relevant to a new generation of partners, working to achieve the Goals throughout the 2020-2030 Decade of Action. UNDP would continue to address complexities in implementing its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, including by exploring and addressing current and new challenges around inequalities, climate change, and migration and forced displacement.

### **Regional and national statements**

39. Board members reiterated that development remained the principal focus of the UNDP mandate, through a programmatic approach to the 2030 Agenda, in line with the 2016 quadrennial

review. They stressed the importance of national capacity building in achieving the Goals, in line with national priorities and to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions. They welcomed the positive financial trends and increased contributions to core resources, including from programme countries. They expressed continued concern, however, with the core/non-core imbalance, which could impair delivery in programme countries, and underscored the importance of predictable, multi-year core funding. They called on the Administrator to continue to find creative ways to address the funding imbalance.

40. A group of delegations drew attention to the special needs of middle-income countries and small island developing states (SIDS), whose status often denied them development assistance and forced them to assume crippling debts, which often came on the heel of climate disasters. They called on UNDP to continue to engage in the multi-country office reviews and increase its engagement with SIDS, including through the Samoa Pathway and the 2020 Oceans Conference. They reiterated their support for the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and looked forward to an expanded UNDP role in South-South efforts.

41. A second group of delegations welcomed the constructive dialogue between the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and United Nations organizations on including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment clauses in the standard administrative agreement for pooled funds. They commended UNDP for following up on the Deloitte report recommendations and the development of the comprehensive strategy and action plan. They applauded UNDP for strengthening capacity on the ground to address the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, including through appointment of a full-time coordinator in Iraq and delivery of face-to-face training to 20 focal points jointly with UNFPA. They sought concrete plans for 2020 to better analyze and enhance mechanisms for victim/survivor support, and requested details on how the organizations would coordinate and share evidence and knowledge, including the outcome of mapping exercises. They requested an update on how the revision of agreements with implementing partners was aligned with the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners.

42. A third group of delegations commended UNDP for ensuring a stable transition while implementing United Nations reforms. During the 2020-2030 Decade of Action, it was important that UNDP remained focused on accelerated action and delivering results. They encouraged UNDP to continue to act as integrator, leveraging its thought leadership and development delivery experience. They welcomed its nature-based solutions for sustainable development and looked forward to learning how it helped to accelerate implementation of the Goals. The group recognized the rigorous UNDP evaluation function as an important instrument of accountability, and sought details on how UNDP shared that knowledge with Member States in preparation for their voluntary national reviews. They requested information on the UNDP Finance Sector Hub and how UNDP was positioning itself to address the shortage of financing for the Goals and how its private sector strategy was unlocking capital for the Goals.

43. A fourth group of delegations called on United Nations organizations to: (a) work together to use world-class evidence and common country analyses integrated and aligned with reform commitments; (b) design a strong Cooperation Framework, operating from a whole-of-system approach, with synergies and complementarity within and among country teams, governments, and stakeholders; (c) ensure country programmes were aligned with the Cooperation Framework; (d) put resources behind collectively defined outcomes and efforts, including accelerating implementation of the Funding Compact; (e) pursue joint programming to overcome silos; and (f) take General Assembly resolution 72/279 into account when adjusting strategic plans during the midterm review. The midterm review should incorporate lessons from results achieved, including in relation to Sustainable Development Goal indicators, organizational alignment, and outcomes of complementary workstreams. The review should reflect how reforms had impacted the way of working and programmatic priorities. They looked forward to further clarification of the UNDP integrator role in the context of system-wide reforms. They encouraged UNDP to conduct a midterm review that generated generic conclusions for 2030 Agenda implementation

that helped to refine strategic plans and results frameworks in a way that lowered barriers to joint efforts and fostered effective, holistic, coherent country team engagement. The group requested advanced outlines of the midterm reviews be made available in a harmonized format for common interagency elements and welcomed the proposal to hold a joint midterm review workshop in advance of the annual session 2020.

44. A fifth group of delegations welcomed UNDP contributions to transitioning the resident coordinator system to the Development Coordination Office; introducing the Cooperation Framework; implementing the management accountability framework; and ensuring coherence with the Funding Compact. They stressed that, with reform mechanisms in place, the United Nations development system had to focus on results and behavioural changes to reach a more collaborative, streamlined, efficient system. They expressed concern with reports of inconsistent messaging on reform across the system, and sought assurances the reforms were being wholeheartedly endorsed and enthusiastically pursued at all levels. They sought reassurances that resident coordinators were informing the performance appraisals of country representatives and vice versa, and keen to see how partner countries would benefit from UNDP expertise and advisory services, including on conflict prevention, rule of law and governance and through its integrator role. They stressed that the Cooperation Framework should be the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities in partnership with host countries, buttressed by effective monitoring and reporting systems and a strengthened common country assessment, grounded in a conflict-sensitive approach, human rights and the principle of leaving no one behind. They encouraged all parties to pursue accurate tracking and harmonized reporting of Funding Compact commitments and redouble efforts to reach targets.

#### **Interactive dialogue with the UNDP Administrator**

45. The Board held its first interactive dialogue of 2020 on the theme *Nature at the Heart of Sustainable Development*. Discussions focused on how investing in nature-based solutions helped safeguard humanity from disasters, ensure water and food security, and minimize security risks and disruptions facing countries. Such solutions were intimately linked to efforts to accelerate the Goals and a central challenge for the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda. Concrete examples of UNDP support to the Governments of Peru and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were highlighted by UNDP representatives in the field. Board members explored the systemic changes needed to scale up the collective global response to tackle the political, financial and other drivers of the loss of nature and how UNDP was uniquely placed to help countries develop their own nature-based solutions.

46. Board members underscored the consequences of conceiving nature and humanity as separate and how dependent humanity was on the wellbeing of the natural ecosystem and vice versa. They stressed that achieving the Goals and the 2030 Agenda, and the overarching goal of eradicating poverty, would succeed only if nature was placed at the heart of sustainable development. The relationship between nature and development had shifted fundamentally. Systemic human actions, economies and industries had become crucial for nature's wellbeing and for the functioning of key life support systems. Countries, governments and communities had to play their part, marrying science-based methods with nature-based solutions. The United Nations development system, in particular UNDP, had a critical coordination and integration role to play in driving comprehensive, nature-based solutions at the global, regional and local levels. Only in that way would it be possible to address all aspects of the challenge, building on the commitments and tools of global climate agreements.

47. Delegations stressed that the international community had a unique opportunity in 2020 to solidify and expand on its commitments and explore nature-based solutions as it engaged in a number of climate-focused global events. Those events would bring to light feasible solutions countries could use to act on climate change through adaptation and mitigation and address the explicit and implicit targets across the Goals. UNDP should work to seize those opportunities and translate them into tangible actions, which required new ways of working. The unique UNDP

value was that it allowed countries to *experiment* how they could do things differently through their own vision. An economic and structural transformation was needed to meet the challenge: the ability to experiment with new governance systems and economic benefits, offered as an integral part of country-level solutions where nature was a central element.

48. In that context, Board members highlighted that UNDP should: (a) systematically work to advocate for and incorporate nature-based solutions in collective planning, both at the United Nations and elsewhere; (b) act as an advocate and designer, through its integrator role, in promoting and inventing nature-based solutions as it helped countries tackle climate challenges; (c) collaborate with the World Bank to establish synergies and complementarity on the climate front; (d) convey the need for structural transformational change to meet the climate challenge; (e) actively participate in key global climate events of 2020; (f) act as catalytic agent-of-change, rallying the private sector to grow the impact of UNDP work on nature-based solutions; (g) work jointly with United Nations organizations, especially the United Nations Environment Programme, government partners, aid agencies and through vertical funds to overcome climate challenges; (h) use UNDP governance expertise to help governments manage ocean and land activities and pursue partnerships to promote nature-based solutions; (i) pursue effective, optimal impact of resources at country level; (j) modify UNDP internal procedures to integrate climate change in internal decisions; and (k) identify catalytic priority areas in delivering development gains and protecting the environment.

## V. Country programmes and related matters

49. The Acting Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and provided an overview of the country programme documents for Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Kuwait and Paraguay; the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Venezuela, from 1 January to 31 December 2020; the second extension of the country programme for Mexico, from 1 January to 30 June 2020; the third extensions of the country programmes for South Africa, from 1 April to 30 June 2020, and for the Syrian Arab Republic, from 1 January to 30 September 2020; and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan, from 1 January to 31 December. In turn, the regional directors for Africa, the Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided details from the regional perspectives.

50. The Executive Board, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, reviewed and approved the country programmes documents for Cuba (DP/DCP/CUB/3), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DP/CPD/COD/3), Iraq (DP/CPD/IRQ/3), Mali (DP/CPD/MLI/4), Kuwait (DP/CPD/KWT/3) and Paraguay (DP/CPD/PRY/3).

51. The Executive Board took note of first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Venezuela, from 1 January to 31 December 2020, as contained in document DP/2020/5.

52. Executive Board took note of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan, from 1 January to 31 December, as contained in document DP/2020/5/Add.1.

53. The Executive Board approved the second extension of the country programme for Mexico, from 1 January to 30 June 2020, as contained in document DP/2020/5.

54. The Executive Board approved the third extensions of the country programmes for South Africa, from 1 April to 30 June 2020, and for the Syrian Arab Republic, from 1 January to 30 September 2020, as contained in document DP/2020/5.

55. In response to an exchange on the country programme document for Cuba, following its adoption, a number of delegations emphasized the importance of refraining from politically focused discussions in the Executive Board.

## UNFPA segment

### Statement by the Executive Director

*Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system*

56. In her statement (available on the [UNFPA website](#)), the Executive Director highlighted that the Nairobi Summit, convened by the Governments of Kenya and Denmark together with UNFPA, was highly successful. The Fund's intention was to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action. The summit aimed to create the political and financial momentum to complete the unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reinvigorate and expand the ICPD community. The summit was not a forum for creating new language; the ICPD Programme of Action remains as valid and relevant as ever. The summit sought to re-energize the movement and secure commitments to accelerate action. The Executive Director further commented that the Nairobi Statement and voluntary commitments demonstrate global resolve to get the job done. More than 8,000 delegates from 173 countries attended; more than 1,250 commitments from Heads of State, Governments, donors, businesses, non-governmental organizations, civil society and more were made; and billions of dollars pledged by private and public-sector partners. As part of the summit's follow-up, the Fund would convene a high-level commission comprising a broad cross-section of stakeholders to give impetus to the Nairobi commitments within existing mechanisms at global, regional and national levels.

57. There is strong political will to achieve the Fund's three transformative results – end preventable maternal deaths; end unmet need for family planning; and end gender-based violence and harmful practices. UNFPA will carry this momentum forward through the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Fund had meanwhile demonstrated a global funding gap of \$222 billion to achieve the three zeros by 2030.

58. The Executive Director highlighted a number of key topics for UNFPA in 2020. The first was the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and the corresponding integrated budget, 2018-2021. The midterm reviews in 2020 would take stock of progress and determine where additional focus may be required. UNFPA would ensure a transparent process with the Board to pinpoint key drivers and enablers to scale up and accelerate implementation over the subsequent two years and lay a solid foundation for the next strategic plan (2022-2025).

59. UNFPA continued to make progress working with the other funds and programmes under the common chapter and, more broadly, under the umbrella of United Nations development system reform. For UNFPA, delivering better together and moving ahead on reform were mainstreamed across all its work. UNFPA remained closely engaged in the regional and multi-country office reviews. Going forward, UNFPA was focused on integration, adaptability, agility, innovation and results, while offering country teams its expertise in areas such as data for development, youth, the demographic dividend and creating financing momentum.

60. The Fund remained committed to strengthening its results-based management. In 2019, external assessments, such as the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), found UNFPA systems performed well, while the Evaluation Office conducted the first-ever developmental evaluation of UNFPA, which had helped it evolve to the next stage of results-based management. On the humanitarian front, the UNFPA Humanitarian Office was meeting the ever-increasing needs of people in emergencies for sexual and reproductive health services, a response to gender-based violence and mental health care. The Fund's strategic humanitarian priorities for 2020 are to improve preparedness and prepositioning, strengthen leadership, and enhance operational capacity. In the past six months, UNFPA had scaled up the gender-based violence response and reproductive health services provision by specialists in its

regional hubs. Internally, the Fund had set up robust tools to ensure protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment; its focus now is to ensure its systems worked effectively as it upholds zero tolerance. In September 2020, the Executive Director would assume the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, promoting survivor-centred approaches. In 2020, the Fund would be active globally in population censuses; already 33 UNFPA programme countries had finished census enumeration, with 46 more to follow in 2020 and 39 in 2021. The newly established Population Data Thematic Fund would help to build capacity for modern electronic censuses and ensure these data informed development.

61. The Executive Director highlighted that, in 2019, UNFPA had received record financial support, with combined revenues exceeding \$1.3 billion; core funding should exceed its target of \$350 million; and co-financing had reached a record \$940 million. The Fund would continue to collaborate with international and regional financing institutions in making the case for increased investments in the health and well-being of women, adolescents and young people. The Executive Director also announced the launch of the UNFPA Core Resources Mobilization Campaign 2020. She underscored the importance of the Funding Compact and the UNFPA structured funding dialogues as vehicles to expand its donor base. UNFPA would continue to harmonize with other United Nations organizations to improve the dialogues and progress toward fulfilling Funding Compact commitments. In this, further to the 2018 decision, continued guidance from the Board will be essential.

62. The President of the Board commended UNFPA for all the work it is doing, noting that he was pleased to hear about progress towards the three zeros and that the midterm review will be an important topic coming before the Board. In terms of the structured funding dialogue, the 2018 text remains in force and this item will come up again in September 2020.

63. Board members expressed strong support for the Fund's mandate and commended its excellent work in making the Nairobi Summit a success, particularly the renewed set of commitments, impressive number of participants, and expansion of stakeholders. They commended UNFPA for its resource mobilization efforts in 2019, which had led to the record levels of funding, exceeding targeted levels for core resources. Overall, delegations underscored the importance of United Nations reform and the central role UNFPA continued to play throughout the Decade of Action towards achievement of the Goals.

64. A group of delegations welcomed UNFPA contributions to the transitioning of the resident coordinator system to the Development Coordination Office; implementation of the management accountability framework; and alignment with the Funding Compact. They welcomed the Fund's doubling of its 2019 cost-share contribution to the resident coordinator system; internalization of the Cooperation Framework when developing country programmes; and operationalization of the 1-per-cent levy on tightly earmarked non-core contributions. Delegations stressed that, with reform mechanisms in place, the United Nations development system should focus on results and behavioural changes to reach a more collaborative, streamlined, efficient system. They expressed concern regarding inconsistent messaging on reform across the United Nations system, and sought assurances the reforms were being wholeheartedly endorsed and enthusiastically pursued at all levels. They welcomed the momentum of the Nairobi Summit and keen to see it further aligned with the reform agenda. They called on UNFPA to continue to promote efficient, consistent messaging internally, including for prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. They sought reassurances that resident coordinators were informing the performance appraisals of country representatives and vice versa, and looked forward to UNFPA contributions to a strong pool of potential resident coordinator candidates. They stressed that the Cooperation Framework should be the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities in partnership with host countries, buttressed by effective monitoring and reporting systems and a strengthened common country assessment, grounded in a conflict-sensitive, human rights-based approach and the principle of leaving no one behind. They

encouraged all parties to pursue accurate tracking and harmonized reporting of Funding Compact commitments and redouble efforts to reach targets.

65. A second group of delegations called on the funds and programmes to: (a) work together to use outstanding evidence and common country analyses integrated and aligned with United Nations reform; (b) design a strong Cooperation Framework, operating from a whole-of-system approach, with synergies and complementarity within and among country teams, Governments, partners and stakeholders; (c) ensure country programmes were aligned with Cooperation Frameworks; (d) put resources behind collectively defined outcomes and efforts, including accelerating implementation of the Funding Compact; (e) pursue joint programming to overcome silos; and (f) take General Assembly resolution 72/279 into account when adjusting their respective strategic plans during the midterm review. The group stressed that the midterm review should incorporate lessons learned from results achieved, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal indicators, organizational alignment, and outcomes of complementary workstreams. The review should reflect how reforms had changed programmatic priorities and fostered a new way of working. The delegations encouraged UNFPA, in its midterm review, to draw conclusions on 2030 Agenda implementation to refine the organizations' strategic plans and results frameworks in a way that lowered barriers to joint efforts and fostered effective, holistic, coherent country team engagement. The group requested advance outlines of the midterm reviews be made available in a harmonized format for common interagency elements, and welcomed the proposal to hold a joint midterm review workshop in advance of the annual session 2020.

66. A third group of delegations requested a tailored roadmap that took into account declarations by countries and commitments at the Nairobi Summit. They encouraged UNFPA to use the midterm review to engage Member States in strengthening the Fund's programmatic work, and called on UNFPA to engage more deeply in the interrelated areas of climate change, development and women. They requested that the Fund step up its support to subregional offices, especially in SIDS. They urged UNFPA to continue to reflect reform principles in its work, including with regard to the common chapter. They expressed ongoing concern with the imbalance between core and non-core funding and its impact on human development in the SIDS, including on women and youth. They urged UNFPA to increase its engagement in SIDS, taking into account gender as a key component of the Samoa Pathway.

67. A fourth group of delegations welcomed the constructive dialogue between the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and United Nations organizations on including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment clauses in the standard administrative agreement for pooled funds. They commended UNFPA for following up on the Deloitte report recommendations presented to the Board in 2019 and requested an update on UNFPA plans to evaluate its effectiveness. They appreciated steps taken in 2018 and 2019 to increase capacity and functioning of the audit and ethics offices and supported efforts of the Victims Right Advocate; the group commended UNFPA for leading system-wide capacity building in that area. In that regard, they requested details at the joint session of the Boards in June 2020 on the number of reports, consequences of allegations, and whether increased resources allocated were sufficient. They welcomed the surveys measuring gaps between victim and survivor needs, management culture, and impact of preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and requested an action plan at the annual session 2020. They commended the Fund for leading the development of the screening tool for implementing partners and, together with UNICEF, for finalizing the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners. They sought clarity on how UNFPA was adhering to the protocol and how it monitored its implementing partners. They requested that the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women prioritize discussions on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in future Board sessions, ensuring a consistent, collective approach. They endorsed the survivor-centred approach and collective commitment to continue using the Secretary-General's real-time online reporting system as an accountability mechanism, and looked forward to receiving updates on implementation and impact in a harmonized way across organizations.

68. Other delegations, in individual interventions, underscored the need for UNFPA to continue to engage with the wider community on gender equality and human rights. They highlighted the success of UNFPA interventions to address female genital mutilation and child marriage, and expressed strong support for the Spotlight Initiative. Delegations also focused on issues of low fertility and ageing, calling on UNFPA to address declining birth rates in the context of reproductive health and rights, as well as unmet needs for family planning, in the regions affected.

69. In response, the Executive Director said UNFPA would integrate the Nairobi commitments into its country programmes and Cooperation Frameworks through country-led voluntary commitments, allowing it to tailor its work to programme countries' diversity. UNFPA had undertaken a regional analysis of the commitments and, in 2020, would begin to address them country by country. National dialogues on the Nairobi commitments were underway and would help establish national mechanisms for their implementation. The Nairobi Summit also recognized the connection between the 2019 ICPD+25 and the 2020 Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forums on which UNFPA was collaborating with UN-Women. At the Beijing+25 meetings, UNFPA would focus on bodily integrity, reaching zero female genital mutilation by 2030, and the role of women and youth in peace and security. The Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2020, similarly, was a historic opportunity to discuss the global challenges of malnutrition, linked to the upcoming Commission on Population and Development and UNFPA operations as guided by its strategic plan.

70. The Executive Director said the Fund was working in partnership with country teams and United Nations organizations to achieve the three zeros and various system-wide initiatives. On the multi-country office review, the Fund had offered new costing models and adjustments to UNFPA tools to adapt to multi-country office needs. It was strengthening its presence in concerned subregions, reviewing business models and resource allocations, and boosting support for South-South and triangular cooperation. Through its resident coordinator strategy, UNFPA encouraged qualified staff to undergo the resident coordinator assessment exercise. Overall, there was an increasingly supportive enabling environment within country teams and among resident coordinators to engage with UNFPA operational and normative agendas. A 2019 country office survey showed that staff capacity and command of the Cooperation Framework and related guidance were bearing fruit. The Fund would propose, as part of its midterm review of its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, a specific indicator to measure alignment of UNFPA country programmes with Cooperation Frameworks. The midterm review would focus on scaling up interventions and accelerating implementation, including mobilizing resources to fund achievement of the unfinished business of the ICPD and the Goals. With regard to the humanitarian-development nexus, UNFPA collaborated closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as part of its 2020 humanitarian review, to ensure women and children were prioritized in crisis situations. The midterm review gave the Fund the opportunity to consider how gendered issues such as climate change affected the ICPD programme of action and how best to tackle root causes.

71. The Executive Director emphasized that UNFPA leadership globally placed prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment at the top of its agenda and continued to take corporate-wide steps to change its management and organizational culture. Combatting gender-based violence in humanitarian settings was a critical component of the Fund's humanitarian work, supported by production of high-quality population data for evidence-based humanitarian programmes. UNFPA ensured access to life-saving services, had set up coordination mechanisms for effective prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, and assured emergency obstetric and newborn care in humanitarian settings. On low fertility and population aging, the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, already had population dynamics built in; the Fund was establishing a technical practice on population aging and low fertility, and had opened an office in Seoul, Republic of Korea, to focus on population aging, low fertility and sex selection. She assured the Board that human rights remained the underpinning of the Fund's mandate and work.

72. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) emphasized that UNFPA was ready to engage with the Board on combatting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and highlighted that interagency cooperation on the issue was exemplary. With strong policies and frameworks in place, United Nations organizations were focused on implementation, employing a victim-centred approach. The Fund was now conducting country-level surveys to identify and address gaps in order to continue to improve the frameworks it had put in place. The UNFPA cultural initiative not only sought new ways of working, in line with United Nations reform, but also prioritized the prevention of prohibited behaviours in the workplace.

73. The Director, Policy and Strategy Division, underscored that the UNFPA investment packages prepared in advance of the Nairobi Summit would be further discussed at country level in order to create national investment packages, which in turn would allow the Fund to mobilize further resources from Governments and the private sector. UNFPA would broaden the platform for cooperation as part of its South-South and triangular cooperation programmes for knowledge and technology-sharing in combatting maternal death and violence against women.

## **VI. Evaluation**

74. The Director, Evaluation Office, presented the developmental evaluation of the results-based management approach in UNFPA; in turn, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided the management response.

75. Board members welcomed the evaluation, which allowed for real-time feedback, and the Fund's commitment to forging a strong evaluation function. They recognized that in undertaking the developmental evaluation, UNFPA had assumed a pioneering role within the United Nations system. They welcomed the Fund's efforts to move to the next level of result-based management to inform decision-making, partly by experimenting with adaptive management methods. They were encouraged to see that UNFPA was working to improve the balance between accountability and learning. Stressing the importance of continued alignment of the Fund's evaluation work with the 2030 Agenda and the Goals, they requested that lessons learned, on both the evaluation and management sides, be shared with other United Nations development system organizations.

76. In response, the Director, Evaluation Office, highlighted that the organization's evaluation plan sought to diversify the quality of evaluations to ensure they could competently inform strategic decision-making in real time. This was part of the broader process towards innovation. The Office shared its evaluation findings and lessons learned, including on evaluation practices, through the United Nations Evaluation Group. It was also keen to share its evaluation experiences with partners at all levels and had, in fact, shared those experiences at the Conference of the International Development Evaluation Association and other global events; it was in the process of preparing a webinar to reach a broader audience.

77. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) stressed that using adaptive methods of learning allowed UNFPA to maximize the evaluation experience in order to better design, plan and adjust its programmes. The Fund's adoption of the adaptive method came at the appropriate time as it sought to scale up and accelerate its programmes in light of Nairobi Summit commitments. The adaptive method allowed for immediate dissemination of knowledge and best practices, and served as an innovator and accelerator, including in humanitarian settings.

78. The Director, Policy and Strategy Division, said the adaptive management approach constituted a new way of working that needed refining. That said, the approach had already proven useful in allowing the Fund to make real-time adjustments toward greater efficiency in its humanitarian response. UNFPA had been able to use the recommendations, for example, to dramatically increase its capacity to respond to sexual and gender-based violence in crisis settings, mobilize resources and services, ensure immediate deployment of expertise, and disperse funds quicker. The Fund had also introduced an innovative, MOPAN-fostered results-based management programme, for which UNFPA had a specific funding envelope, to strengthen country office skills in using adaptive management to adjust programmes at country level.

79. The Executive Board took note of the developmental evaluation of the results-based management approach in UNFPA (DP/FPA/2020/CRP.1) and the management response (DP/FPA/2020/CRP.2).

## **VII. Country programmes and related matters**

80. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided an overview of the country programme documents for Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali and Paraguay; the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela, as well as the country programme extensions for South Africa and the Syrian Arab Republic. In turn, the regional directors for the Arab States, West and Central Africa, East and Southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided details from their regional perspectives.

81. The Executive Board, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, reviewed and approved the country programmes documents for Cuba (DP/FPA/CPD/CUB/9), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DP/FPA/CPD/COD/5), Iraq (DP/FPA/CPD/IRQ/3), Mali (DP/FPA/CPD/MLI/8) and Paraguay (DP/FPA/CPD/PRY/8).

82. The Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela, and also approved the third, three-month extension for South Africa and the third, one-year extension for the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic (DP/FPA/2020/2).

83. In response to an exchange on the country programme document for Cuba, following its adoption, a number of delegations emphasized the importance of refraining from politically focused discussions in the Executive Board.

## **UNOPS segment**

### **Statement by the Executive Director**

84. In her statement, the Executive Director, UNOPS, highlighted that in 2020, on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, UNOPS was a robust organization. It had finished 2019 on strong financial footing with a business model known for efficiency and effectiveness, making it suited to be a driving force in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations reform. Its social impact investing initiative, known as S3I, had emerged as a pioneer of innovative financing and featured prominently in the Secretary-General's financing for development strategy. S3I – whose name had evolved to 'sustainable infrastructure impact investments' – was a model for channelling private sector investment to developing countries, helping them with affordable housing and renewable energy needs. To mark that new beginning, a new S3I office would open in Helsinki in 2020. As an expert of quality infrastructure – a key element of its mandate and an integral part of S3I – UNOPS supported governments to ensure long-term, sustainable, resilient development. It had helped shape G20 principles for quality infrastructure in 2019 and, through its work with the Global Commission on Adaptation, supported governments to find innovative ways to address climate change, in line with the Goals and the Paris Agreement. The global demand for sustainable infrastructure, key for sustainable development, was unprecedented, and UNOPS was working with the private sector to ensure it was affordable and no one was left behind. That in turn translated into employment opportunities, access to health and education, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

85. The Executive Director stressed that UNOPS put gender at the centre of all its work. Its infrastructure and procurement projects had the potential to create new opportunities for women and girls. Effective procurement influenced the supply chain, supporting women-led businesses and prioritizing suppliers with better gender-parity results. Similarly, gender-conscious infrastructure offered women a better life, improving access to health, education and jobs, and fostering their self-empowerment. UNOPS had also made progress internally; women represented

43 per cent of personnel and UNOPS was striving to reach 47 per cent by end 2020 and go beyond United Nations targets in the long run. In 2020, UNOPS was focused on the midterm review of its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and would engage closely with its newly established Client Board to cull feedback on the way forward. UNOPS was committed to the success of the new resident coordinator system and an active member of United Nations country teams, especially important given it was often a non-resident agency. UNOPS worked hard to be the preferred partner of United Nations system organizations, including for business operations through its shared service centres. The Executive Director looked forward to leading those efforts as the newly appointed chair of the High-level Committee on Management.

86. Board members expressed continued strong support for UNOPS mandate and unique business model, and commended its ongoing work in sustainable infrastructure and procurement, including through the newly launched S3I initiative. Sustainable procurement and infrastructure were bedrocks of efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Goals; delegations commended UNOPS for being awarded the gold standard in sustainable procurement for the fourth time by the Chartered Institute for Procurement and Supply. They encouraged UNOPS to lead efforts to strengthen sustainable procurement across the United Nations development system. Delegations welcomed the mainstreaming of gender equality throughout UNOPS work and its integration in sustainable procurement and infrastructure projects. They called on UNOPS to continue to engage with other United Nations organizations in achieving the reform agenda, and encouraged it to help improve system-wide service delivery. They encouraged it to join other organizations in responding to the call for proposals from the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda. They requested that UNOPS step up informal engagements with Member States.

87. A group of delegations highlighted that given its sustainable procurement and infrastructure expertise, UNOPS had a special role to play in small island developing states. They called on UNOPS to contribute to increasing developing countries' production capacity, which was key for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. They encouraged UNOPS to prioritize areas of the Samoa Pathway, and requested details on how UNOPS intended to engage with the SIDS, in particular through the social impact investment and S3I initiatives, in partnership with the private sector and national governments, in line with national ownership, and through public-private partnerships, an area in which UNOPS could use its operational reserve. They looked forward to a detailed roadmap on the use of the operational reserve at the annual session 2020.

88. Another group of delegations commended UNOPS for establishing and ensuring follow-up systems for cross-cutting sustainability issues, such as human rights, gender equality, environment and anti-corruption. In that regard, they requested an update on its gender equality strategy and challenges to it. They were pleased that UNOPS was the first United Nations organization to adopt internationally recognized reporting standards and welcomed its contributions to the Goals. They welcomed the increasing demand for UNOPS services and revenues it brought but sought details on how the organization ensured its administrative capacity and internal control system met the increased demand. In that regard, they encouraged UNOPS to continue to invest in developing its enterprise resource planning system, oneUNOPS, to reduce risk and facilitate standardized processes. They welcomed the growing operational reserve as a sign of its financial health but sought details on the investment strategy for its use. Underscoring the importance of UNOPS coordination with the United Nations system, delegations looked forward to learning more about the Client Board, as part of the Secretary-General's management reform, as well as UNOPS continued support to the reform agenda, including in strengthening integrated business operations and common premises.

89. In response, the Executive Director pointed out that the rise in the operational reserve was due essentially to UNOPS strong risk management of operating margins over more than a decade, thanks to which it was able to reinvest the operational reserve in its programmes and attract new partnerships, especially with the private sector. UNOPS would give the Board a more in-depth presentation on the status of its operational reserves, risk management approach and the S3I initiative at the annual session 2020, including within the broader context of United Nations

reform and midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. UNOPS was also working through its Global Innovation Centre and the S3I initiative to devise new tools and new ways of working with governments, partners, donors and the private sector to address the differentiated challenges and needs of SIDS and least developed countries. The Global Innovation Centre was a powerful mechanism that supported young entrepreneurs in developing countries and connected them to a global support network.

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