



**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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Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Organizational matters**

**Report of the second regular session 2020  
(31 August to 4 September 2020, New York)**

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## I. Organizational matters

1. The second regular session 2020 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held virtually for the second time, on an exceptional basis, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 31 August to 4 September 2020.
2. The Executive Board adopted the agenda and workplan for its second regular session 2020 (DP/2020/L.3), as orally amended, and approved the report of the annual session 2020 (DP/2020/18). The Board took note of the draft annual workplan for 2021 (DP/2020/CRP.2) and approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2021.
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2020 appeared in document DP/2021/2, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2021/2 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2021:

First regular session:	1 to 4 February 2021
Annual session:	7 to 11 June 2021
Second regular session:	30 August to 2 September 2021

### Statement by the President of the Board

5. The President of the Executive Board underscored that COVID-19 had exacerbated global challenges, poverty and inequality, and intensified the urgency of the Sustainable Development Goals and multilateralism. Its impact on health and socioeconomic life was massive, though its consequences were disproportionately affecting the poor, with two-out-of-three COVID-19-related deaths occurring in developing countries. This accentuated the fundamental value of the United Nations development system and mandates of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS within the context of the Goals and joint efforts to support countries' development aspirations. The pandemic laid bare the importance of the Board's work addressing the global emergency, which extended beyond ensuring accountability and monitoring the organizations' performance. Board deliberations had to transcend political developments and intergovernmental language to craft decisions through consensus that promoted UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS work to protect and make a difference in people's lives.

### Joint segment

## II. Internal audit and investigation

6. The Director, Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), UNDP, the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS), UNFPA, and the Director, Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG), UNOPS, presented the following respective reports: the UNDP annual report of the Office of Audit and Investigations on internal audit and investigations activities in 2019 (DP/2020/16); the report of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services on UNFPA internal audit and investigation activities in 2019 (DP/FPA/2020/6), the opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the UNFPA framework of governance, risk management and control (DP/FPA/2020/6/Add.1) and the annual report of the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee (DP/FPA/2020/6/Add.2); and the UNOPS: Annual report of the Internal Audit and Investigations Group on internal audit and investigations activities in 2019 (DP/OPS/2020/2). Their presentations were followed by the respective management responses by the Director, Bureau for

Management Services, UNDP, the Acting Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, and the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS.

7. A group of delegations, addressing UNDP, expressed appreciation for the disaggregated information in OAI audits and investigations. Noting the OAI annual report 2019, and those of preceding years, included a section on cases registered with the OAI Social and Environmental Compliance Unit, the group highlighted an apparent discrepancy between updates on cases of alleged non-compliance with UNDP social and environmental standards, which were reported annually, and updates provided regularly through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council. They sought clarity on how UNDP and GEF coordinated reporting, including decisions regarding release of information to Member States and GEF Council members.

8. In other interventions, a delegation encouraged UNDP to continue improving the harmonized approach to cash transfers, especially for projects funded through government cost-sharing. It sought clarity on: (a) the high percentage of cases assessed as ‘unsubstantiated’ or ‘lacking sufficient information’; (b) the status of the clustering process, including lessons from the UNICEF Global Shared Service Centre; and (c) whether UNDP intended to extend its anti-fraud clauses to include contractual agreements with partners other than implementing partners.

9. Another delegation recognized OAI support to the UNDP Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and UNDP efforts to address increased levels of procurement fraud. It expressed concern with systematic areas of weakness regarding the UNDP role as GEF principle recipient and requested that future audits include timelines for remedial actions and focus on building the capacity of local principle recipients for role transfer. The delegation welcomed the partnership between IAIG and UNOPS management and commended UNOPS for the decreased duration of IAIG investigations and UNOPS implementation of internal controls to improve internal governance.

10. In response, the Director, Bureau of Management Services, UNDP, addressing GEF-related questions, said the appropriate course of action was to discuss oversight findings through the GEF Council and determine how to synchronize them; the number of outstanding concerns actually related to four projects out of some 480.

11. The Director, Office of Audit and Investigations, UNDP, said OAI had not received any request to harmonize reporting procedures with the GEF Council and Executive Board, though it was possible to arrange them. Currently, OAI informed the GEF Council through its secretariat when OAI opened new investigation cases, either within the framework of the UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit or OAI investigations. In line with procedures, OAI informally briefed the GEF Council biannually and was ready to discuss involving and briefing the Executive Board at or on the margins of its sessions to harmonize procedures. OAI would welcome a more comprehensive presentation of OAI issues related GEF in its annual report to the Board.

12. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/10 on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigations and management responses.

### **III. Ethics**

13. The Director, UNDP Ethics Office, the Director, UNFPA Ethics Office, and the Director, UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office each presented the following respective reports: the activities of the UNDP Ethics Office in 2019 (DP/2020/17), the UNFPA report of the Ethics Office 2019 (DP/FPA/2020/7) and the activities of the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in 2019 (DP/OPS/2020/3). Their presentations were followed by the respective management responses delivered by the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, the Acting Deputy

Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, and the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS.

14. There were no comments from delegations on this item.

15. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/11 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS.

#### **IV. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

16. The Director, Bureau of Management Services, UNDP, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA, and the Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration, UNOPS, provided oral updates on their organizations responses to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, with a particular focus on measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

17. A group of delegations highlighted five points. One, they welcomed UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS progress while recognizing the need to continue allocating capacity to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. They looked forward to the UNFPA Executive Director assuming the role of Inter-agency Standing Committee Champion on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in January 2021. They commended UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for progress implementing the recommendations of the independent review of organizational responses in 2019. They sought details on how the organizations were monitoring progress and encouraged them to communicate results to the Board. Two, they stressed the need for the United Nations to continue to uphold international standards to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Recognizing the drop in sexual misconduct reported in UNDP, they asked if other organizations had experienced the same. They requested details on how sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment coordinators, networks and focal points shared information and how it informed interagency mechanisms. Three, they requested details on how UNDP and UNFPA would use survey data to inform their approach to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and facilitate sharing of results throughout the United Nations. Four, they welcomed efforts to strengthen implementing partners' accountability and sought feedback on preliminary experiences with the assessment and how it linked to the UNOPS Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement (DRIVE) Programme. Five, welcoming prioritized support to victims/survivors, they requested information on when the UNFPA mapping exercise of services would share its results; they looked forward to an update of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS experience implementing the United Nations Victims Assistance Protocol.

18. Another delegation welcomed UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS measures to address the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment during COVID-19. It commended UNDP for adding investigators to OAI to handle sexual misconduct allegations and UNOPS for strengthening accountability of suppliers through due diligence assessments and tender processes. Plans to extend that approach to all implementing partners were critical for accountability. The delegation appreciated UNFPA efforts to roll out the implementing partners assessment, stressing the need for continued United Nations coordination to ensure joint oversight of high-risk partners.

19. In response, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) underscored that UNFPA sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment work was integral to its rights-based approach. The survey and mapping had helped UNFPA obtain specific information allowing deeper analysis and differentiation of cases according to humanitarian or development settings; assessing victim survival was more difficult as it required time and better coordination. While

online psychosocial assistance was crucial, UNFPA was developing indicators and mapping to identify victims in remote places.

20. The Director, Bureau of Management Services, UNDP, said the UNDP strategy and action plan was based on the Deloitte and Touche external review, which helped monitor progress. The UNDP sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment task force met monthly and provided updates to the Executive Group; UNDP had strengthened its implementing partner capacity assessment to gauge sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. It had conducted webinars to educate country offices on how to identify threats; the survey showed that a significant portion of country offices had mechanisms for victim/survivor support.

21. The Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration, UNOPS, affirmed that UNOPS monitored progress against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment recommendations, most of which had been implemented. While there had not been a major drop in allegation cases, numbers had slowed; UNOPS was up to speed reporting those cases. In country-level high-risk areas, UNOPS had established sexual exploitation and abuse focal points, with whom it conducted training to cull feedback and inform strategies. UNOPS planned to replicate DRIVE, its due diligence programme catered to vendors, for implementing partners.

22. The Executive Board took note of the presentation made by UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

## **V. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters**

23. The Deputy Chief Finance Officer, UNDP, presented the joint comprehensive proposal on the cost recovery policy (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/1), in response to Board decision 2018/21, on behalf of UNDP and UNFPA.

24. A group of delegations welcomed the ‘promising’, ‘much improved’ revised joint cost recovery policy. They welcomed measures to minimize cross-subsidization of non-core resources by core resources and improve harmonization, transparency, efficiency, and impact within UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). They expressed full support for the organizations’ lead in harmonizing cost recovery within the United Nations. They recognized progress harmonizing cost classifications, the more rigid, transparent handling of waivers, and the ‘big step’ forward on transparency. Appreciating the specificity on differentiated rates, they look forward to continuing discussions to improve Board understanding of ‘underlying’ reasons. They made two suggestions: (a) expand the harmonized policy throughout the United Nations development system and help meet Funding Compact commitments; (b) establish a solid review mechanism, including policy monitoring and review at regular intervals, harmonized and transparent annual reporting, and better evidence for the policy’s application, effect and impact, to incentivize high-quality flexible funding and minimize cross-subsidization. When operationalizing the policy, the organizations should continue to be guided by: (a) the notion of cost recovery, as defined in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243); (b) compliance of United Nations organizations, Member States and other stakeholders, with regular monitoring; and (c) a harmonized approach to differentiated rates across organizations.

25. In response, the Deputy Chief Finance Officer, UNDP, thanked delegations for their participation and constructive approach since 2012 in developing the revised cost recovery policy aligned with quadrennial review requirements. He looked forward to working with the other organizations and Member States in providing regular reporting to the Board.

26. The Director, Division of Management Services, UNFPA, thanked the Board for its guidance throughout the long process and drew attention to the strong partnership between UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women in developing the revised cost recovery policy. The four organizations would continue to engage with the United Nations system through the Finance and Budget Network of the High-level Committee on Management.

27. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/12 on the joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy.

## **VI. Working methods of the Board**

28. The Secretary of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS provided an oral presentation of the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women on the working methods of the Executive Boards: proposed workplans for 2021, in response to Board decisions 2018/22 and 2020/2.

29. In the sole intervention, a delegation welcomed the joint response and proposed workplans for 2021, to ensure greater efficiency in Board proceedings by harmonizing the work of the three Boards without negatively affecting substantive debate. The delegation, however, expressed concern that shifting agenda items out of the second regular session could result in a concurrent reduction in oversight and reduced visibility of programmatic activities. While supporting the 2021 workplan for the three Boards, the delegation stressed the need to reserve the option to revisit the workplan based on the Board's experience implementing the plan in 2021. The delegation reiterated the importance of holding three Board sessions annually for each Board to preserve effective execution of the Board's oversight function.

30. In response, the Secretary of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS reassured delegations that in their supporting role the secretariats of the three New York-based Executive Boards, and respective agencies, prioritized maintaining full Board oversight of agency activities. The Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS maintained its commitment to holding three sessions annually. The Secretary looked forward to continuing to work with the membership of the Board through the Bureau to constantly improve the Board's efficiency and ensure its effectiveness.

31. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/13 on the working methods of the Executive Board.

### **UNDP segment**

## **VII. Interactive dialogue with the UNDP Administrator and structured funding dialogue**

32. In his [statement](#), the UNDP Administrator discussed the organization's work within the context of COVID-19. Global human development was set to decline for the first time since UNDP developed the concept and its measurement in 1990. Inequalities across countries worsened the pandemic's impact. Two-out-of-three COVID-19 deaths were occurring in developing countries. Lack of global cooperation early in 2020 had left the world fractured and unprepared for the pandemic which, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, represented a generational test for the United Nations and multilateralism. A collective effort was needed to prepare, respond, build better and design a future that looked beyond recovery towards 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals remained the compass for decisions ahead, including for official development assistance.

33. The United Nations had put together a strong, integrated response to COVID-19 – spearheading health interventions, appealing for a global ceasefire, addressing the humanitarian impacts, and forging a socioeconomic support framework. UNDP lent its support from the onset: co-leading with the Development Coordination Office (DCO) the development of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 and assuming technical lead role for its operationalization through the resident coordinator system. UNDP worked with United Nations partners in designing 117 socioeconomic impact assessments in 83 countries across five regions that revealed a number of unsettling issues: the global epidemiological curve had not flattened; developing countries had repurposed vast amounts of fiscal resources to fight the pandemic, leaving them fiscally vulnerable; and there was urgent need to expand social protection systems.

34. UNDP had already begun to address those issues. Seventy-five countries had socioeconomic response plans showing innovation and ingenuity, 60 were supported by UNDP accelerator labs. The accelerator labs were expanding to reach 70 per cent of least developed and low-income countries and over 70 small-island developing states. As part of its investment in systems approaches, and moving beyond recovery toward 2030, UNDP focused its COVID-19 offer on: governance and agency, social protection, the green economy, and digital disruption. Its support was three-fold: (a) maintaining business continuity and keeping doors open; (b) minimizing the pandemic's impact and development losses, focused on the most vulnerable; and (c) designing systemic investments that address underlying conditions and chart sustainable pathways to 2030.

35. Financing the COVID-19 response, UNDP redeployed \$30 million through its Rapid Response Facility, providing 130 countries (45 in crisis/fragile settings) and 110 country offices access to funds to prepare, respond and recover. It placed over \$112 million in purchase orders, serving 136 businesses, including country offices and regional hubs, by leveraging its global procurement architecture, and it repurposed core and non-core resources of 90 country offices. The UNDP Rapid Financing Facility, launched in July 2020, made \$100 million available so country offices could leverage partnerships and support national socioeconomic recovery, including technical support to 52 countries to develop integrated national financing frameworks.

36. #NextGenUNDP continued to make UNDP more effective, efficient, transparent. In 2019, UNDP had balanced its institutional budget for a third consecutive year, and in 2020 was ranked as the most transparent United Nations agency and third most transparent development organization on the Aid Transparency Index. On reform, UNDP was addressing the challenges of a new way of engaging with governments, practicing mutual accountability and managing the financial incentives that inhibited progress on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Given the COVID-19 toll on staff, UNDP prioritized its duty-of-care role, strengthening digital skills and ensuring personnel safety, including protecting against sexual exploitation and abuse. The Administrator underscored the importance of flexible, predictable funding, appealing to Member States to meet the Funding Compact commitment of 30 per cent core resources by 2023.

37. Across the Board, delegations commended UNDP and staff for their commitment throughout the pandemic. They expressed full support for the UNDP lead technical role helping countries assess impact and forge a socioeconomic response to COVID-19. They welcomed the four areas of the COVID-19 response and expected UNDP to continue prioritizing national capacity building aimed at ensuring inclusive, sustainable development. COVID-19 represented a human security crisis in which UNDP had a central role addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They were keen to gain UNDP analytical support to track the pandemic's impact at country level and design appropriate responses differentiated to country needs. They welcomed the central UNDP role in the United Nations system response to COVID-19 and encouraged it to continue helping countries chart their way into a 'new normal', focused on inequalities, marginalization and discrimination toward a prosperous, green future. They strongly supported United Nations system coordination through the

resident coordinator system to address the pandemic and encouraged UNDP to lead joint activities in its core competency areas: governance, rule of law, crisis prevention, recovery. Noting the United Nations 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was imperative the international community safeguard multilateralism and strengthen multilateral institutions.

38. A group of delegations underscored the importance of un-earmarked funding that allowed UNDP to respond quickly to the pandemic's unforeseen events. They welcomed the improved recognition of donor funding to core resources during COVID-19 and reaffirmed commitments to the Funding Compact and to allocating and promoting core, flexible funding. As COVID-19 might affect Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 implementation, they urged UNDP to determine the most COVID-19-affected outcomes and update the Board on steps to mitigate negative effects. They appreciated UNDP collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women to strengthen the structured funding dialogues and Funding Compact reporting so the Boards could engage in interactive dialogue that guided decisions and strategic plan implementation at an aggregate level. The group highlighted three issues. One, commending the rise in multi-year core commitments, they stressed the need to expand and diversify the core donor base to ensure sustainability. They welcomed UNDP receiving 10 per cent of non-core resources through inter-agency pooled funds, a welcome development to counter the growing global trend towards greater earmarking. They sought clarity on how UNDP planned to increase core resources to reach the 30 per cent Funding Compact target. Two, they encouraged UNDP to increase its share of development-related expenditures through joint activities and engage in dialogue with United Nations entities, in particular DCO, to improve its operational definition and harmonize indicators for Funding Compact implementation. Three, they welcomed the costing of results and funding gap analysis and requested details on how UNDP mitigated shortages and ensured strategic plan areas received adequate funding. They reiterated that country programmes had to derive from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and commended UNDP comprehensive reporting on Funding Compact implementation, including progress in 76.9 per cent of targets.

39. Another group of delegations said COVID-19 was testing the outcomes of United Nations reform, making reform implementation the centrepiece of system-wide agility and coherence and optimizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They called for greater concerted action in interagency coordination and collaboration, efficiencies, the Funding Compact, UNSDCF, and the management accountability framework. They called on the United Nations system to take a holistic approach to delivering the Goals, aligned with the quadrennial review and in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness, gender equality, empowerment of women and persons living with disabilities, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and a green future. They encouraged UNDP and United Nations entities to engage with the Board throughout the development of the new strategic plans.

40. In individual interventions, delegations reaffirmed the centrality of poverty eradication and development as the UNDP core mandate. That included addressing food security, malnutrition, their root causes and the structural changes needed to address them. There was general appreciation for UNDP efficiency gains and balanced institutional budget for a third consecutive year. Concern was raised however that United Nations reform was depriving UNDP access to partners in its mandated areas. Middle-income countries (MICs) underscored their special needs and contested the narrow method of classifying countries by gross domestic product, which limited UNDP ability to respond to MICs challenges; they welcomed UNDP pioneering indices that included measurements beyond GDP per capita, an initiative United Nations organizations and international financial institutions should replicate. They sought details on UNDP plans to: scale up temporary basic income programmes by arranging funding through microfinance institutions; address gaps in digital disruption and exclusion; and support climate vulnerable countries. Delegations welcomed the UNDP 2.0 Offer that focused on recovery, transforming societies, governance, security, the green economy and digital disruption. They recognized the importance of a strong core resource base and

emphasized that earmarked contributions had to complement core contributions and be allocated in line with countries' self-defined needs.

41. In response, the Administrator underscored the United Nations continued role on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a pillar of international cooperation in the face of global crises. UNDP was on the frontlines, helping countries face difficult socioeconomic and political choices, mobilizing financing and skills. It was critical in the crisis response, helping Governments identify the most vulnerable and resume a development pathway, as per the UNDP 2.0 Offer. The pandemic had brought into stark light the inequalities inherent in the digital divide; UNDP helped countries shape policies for an inclusive, responsive ecosystem of digitalization that made it possible to manage complex challenges. The promotion of a temporary basic income showed how UNDP culled best practices, through its Global Policy Network, and assisted countries struggling with the pandemic's socioeconomic impact. Climate change had likewise brought to the fore the deleterious effects of COVID-19; UNDP was pursuing its Climate Promise to combine a climate change transformational pathway with crisis management investment priority-setting. On microfinance, UNDP was leveraging SDG Impact to help Governments mobilize bond assets to use equity markets and explore how the Goals could leverage private capital for SDG-aligned outcomes. UNDP continued to work through the Funding Compact and thematic funding windows to encourage Member States to invest in UNDP as a value proposition and broaden and diversify its donor base. Evidence of the UNDP value proposition was the significant portion of funding co-invested by programme countries at some \$1 billion. Core resources gave an institution the agility to respond and a platform from which earmarked financing achieved optimal value. UNDP engaged with the private sector through for example SDG Impact as a complement to its work, not to adopt a private sector business model, working at the public and private finance interface to achieve the Goals.

42. The Acting Associate Administrator, UNDP, highlighted the UNDP and Peacebuilding Support Office co-development of guidance that made conflict sensitivity and vulnerability assessments an integral part of country team impact assessments and response plans, in line with humanitarian-development-peace nexus objectives. Similarly, UNDP work in the Sahel supported stability through local governance and livelihoods programmes for youth and disadvantaged populations, including the internally displaced, within the humanitarian response plan. UNDP had also signed an agreement with the European Union to strengthen local governance mechanisms in Yemen and support livelihoods, job creation and service delivery in health and education. UNDP was actively engaged in the Food Systems Summit 2021 preparations, using its integrator role to address market and infrastructure issues affecting food production.

43. The Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP, said RBLAC had piloted a virtual field mission to Guatemala in 2020 during which participants had the opportunity to visit UNDP programmes. Participants in the virtual mission included high-level officials in Guatemala, UNDP country office staff, the United Nations country team, and private sector entrepreneurs. The virtual mission proved highly productive and the savings derived from conducting the mission 'virtually' were welcome. Virtual field missions were a viable and effective alternative when on-the-ground visits were not an option.

44. The Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, said across the RBAP region the message was clear: conventional 'rapid growth' pathways were no longer viable. In 2020, the biggest demand for UNDP assistance was inclusive green pathways and the policies, investments and institutional changes needed to implement them in three key areas: testing and leveraging investments in renewable energy within the broader ecosystem; engaging the circular economy to regenerate resources and reduce waste; and shrinking the widening gap resulting from the digital economy.

45. The Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP, underscored that UNDP business continuity assistance had helped African countries halt the pandemic's impact on their ability to lead – thanks to digital technology allowing ministries and essential services to continue working. There was an increasing appetite for democracy across the continent as some 20 elections were planned for 2020-2021; UNDP was playing a key role maintaining election momentum, helping countries ensure their electorate exercised their rights in a safe environment. In parallel, UNDP and the African Union had partnered to assess the COVID-19 impact on peace and security in Africa to generate policy positions. Promoting social cohesion, UNDP was working with Governments to identify vulnerable populations and provide them with social protection and safety net schemes.

46. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/14 on the UNDP structured funding dialogue.

## **VIII. Evaluation**

47. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), UNDP, presented the annual report on evaluation 2019 (DP/2020/13) as well as the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle income countries (MICs) (DP/2020/21), which was followed by the management response to evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle income countries (DP/2020/22) by the Director, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP.

### *Annual report on evaluation 2019*

48. Noting the revised evaluation policy (decision 2019/19) called for an increase in resource allocation to IEO, delegations asked if the 3 per cent target had been fulfilled and how IEO was using the resources to strengthen its work, including oversight of the quality of decentralized evaluations. Recognizing UNDP efforts to address the weakness of country-level evaluations, they noted the quality of most decentralized evaluations remained low. They asked how UNDP was using its expert evaluators' roster to address that weakness and sought details on targets for country office allocations to decentralized evaluations. Delegations suggested that UNDP conduct a thematic synthesis of evaluations that enabled evaluators to gather results from across evaluation reports; they urged management to continue to promote a culture of evaluation in country offices, including using evaluation as a criterion in country directors' performance appraisals.

49. In response, the Director, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, reaffirmed UNDP commitment to promoting a strong evaluation culture and improving the quality of decentralized evaluations. While country offices budgeted resources for evaluation, challenges often arose due to implementation delays and evaluators' lack of language skills, issues UNDP was working to resolve. While the 1 per cent resource allocation target for evaluations had not yet been achieved, actual resources allocated were increasing annually, showing a positive trend.

50. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office, said only 55 per cent of planned country office evaluations had been implemented at year's end, underscoring the need for UNDP management to prioritize them and ensure evaluation outcomes informed country programmes. IEO had developed revised decentralized evaluation guidelines to support country office planning, though more financial support and management engagement were needed; IEO informed UNDP management it was prepared to participate in country programme document appraisal committees to ensure country programmes reflected evaluations and evaluation plans were feasible and valuable. It was also working with UNDP to set a budget line for decentralized evaluations to ensure they were sufficiently resourced and to strengthen the system of quality assurance.

*Evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle income countries*

51. Delegations highlighted the important contribution of the evaluation and its recommendations. It was noted that MICs were home to a significant portion of people living in poverty and their efforts were essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Significant development gains in MICs would have multiplier effects, benefitting the overall global economy and improving international and South-South cooperation and policy dialogue. MIC strategies had to be flexible and dynamic, recognizing the different levels of development within MICs and impact of COVID-19 on development gains. UNDP was encouraged to strengthen its capacity to address MICs' differentiated development needs.

52. The Director, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support said the management response to the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in MICs stated that UNDP would provide the Board with different options to improve allocation of resources to MICs and development financing for SIDS, in line with nationally defined priorities.

53. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/15 on UNDP evaluation.

## **IX. UNDP country programmes and related matters**

54. The Acting Associate Administrator, UNDP, provided an overview of the 11 country programme documents up for Board approval and nine country programme extensions. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNDP would continue to work within the existing country programme to continue engaging with partners and align with the strategic framework under preparation with UNFPA and UNICEF.

55. He further noted that, as 2020 continued to be a transition year towards full implementation of UNSDCFs, UNDP was making progress ensuring alignment of UNDP efforts with other United Nations organizations under resident coordinators' leadership. He underscored the importance of considering the two documents together to ensure a holistic approach to United Nations and UNDP country-level programming.

In turn, the regional directors for the Regional Bureau for Africa, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean presented the country programme documents from their respective regional perspectives.

56. At the request of the Government, the review of the country programme for China (DP/DCP/CHN/4) was deferred to the first regular session 2021.

57. The Executive Board reviewed and approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Belarus (DP/DCP/BLR/4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (DP/DCP/BIH/4), Colombia (DP/DCP/COL/3), Eswatini (DP/DCP/SWZ/4), Indonesia (DP/DCP/IDN/4 and Corr.1), Kazakhstan (DP/DCP/KAZ/4), Serbia (DP/DCP/SRB/3), including the results and resources framework for Kosovo <sup>1</sup> (DP/DCP/SRB/3/Add.1), Timor-Leste (DP/DCP/TLS/3 and Corr.1), Turkey (DP/DCP/TUR/4), Turkmenistan (DP/DCP/TKM/3) and Uganda (DP/DCP/UGA/5).

58. The Executive Board approved the two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022 and the three-year extensions of the

<sup>1</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

country programmes for Mauritius and Seychelles from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023, as contained in document DP/2020/23.

59. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bahrain, Cameroon, El Salvador, Guinea-Bissau and Libya from 1 January to 31 December 2021, as contained in document DP/2020/23, and the first extension of the country programme for China from 1 January to 28 February 2021, as contained in document DP/2020/23/Add.1.

## **X. United Nations Volunteers**

60. The Acting Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and the Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), presented UNV: Report of the Administrator (DP/2020/14), pursuant to Board decision 2018/8.

61. Delegations commended UNV for its strong performance under the Executive Coordinator's leadership. They welcomed 2019 progress and underscored the critical role of UNV and UN-Volunteers in supporting developing countries to achieve the Goals. UNV work was especially welcome in assisting national efforts to address COVID-19, to which it had rapidly adjusted and provided support. That 81 per cent of UN-Volunteers came from the South underscored the UNV contribution to South-South cooperation and to guaranteeing a geographically balanced United Nations system. The invaluable UNV promotion of universal health coverage was highlighted, along with its Global Health Volunteer Initiative. They encouraged Member States to strengthen UNV by allocating multi-year, predictable core resources and supporting the UNV Special Voluntary Fund; this would help UNV develop innovative volunteer-based solutions, knowledge-sharing and transformative projects, including initiatives such as UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, which other United Nations organizations could adopt. Delegations commended UNV for reaching gender parity among volunteers.

62. A group of delegations from the least developed countries (LDCs) commended UNV for its impressive mobilization and recruitment of UN-Volunteers and expanding presence in more than 150 countries. They welcomed that 51 per cent of volunteers were women and appreciated the continuing trend of increasing numbers of national volunteers, who now made up more than half of all volunteers. Recognizing UNV services were directed mainly toward Goals 3, 10 and 17, the group stressed that LDC priorities were diverse and COVID-19 was creating a surge in demand for volunteers in LDCs.

63. Another group of delegations commended UNV progress in 2019 and its measurable, transparent, accountable indicators to assess strategic plan performance. UNV was at the forefront of mobilizing national and international UN-Volunteers during the Decade of Action and, in 2019, the number of home and host countries partnering with UNV had reached a new record. High-quality UNV services gave the United Nations system a unique opportunity to accelerate and localize implementation of the Goals. In 2019, 54 United Nations entities used UNV services, showing strong demand to mobilize volunteers in development and peacekeeping operations. The UNV digital transformation begun in 2017 had allowed it to rapidly address COVID-19; in 2019, 13,000 online volunteers took up assignments. Delegations welcomed the new knowledge portal and corporate service desk that responded to over 15,000 queries per month from potential volunteers and United Nations partners. They welcomed UNV support in the United Nations COVID-19 response, deploying almost 1,000 UN-Volunteers, 90 per cent of whom were national UN-Volunteers, and over 1,700 online volunteers. With 81 per cent of volunteers from the global South and 51 per cent female, UNV was an invaluable asset in United Nations work to leave no one behind. They welcomed the increased contribution of UNV to gender-responsive sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights measures with UNFPA and supported the UNV

inclusion agenda, including through the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities.

64. In response, UNV Executive Coordinator highlighted the expanding UNV partnership with the World Health Organization that enabled UNV to work and identify national talent on health-related issues across regions, especially in Africa, including the Africa Young Women Health Champions Initiative. While there were no restrictions in the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities limiting where they could serve, UNV sought to address their needs under its duty-of-care responsibilities before deployment. UNV promoted the placement of volunteers with disabilities in regular positions in the United Nations system.

65. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/16 on the United Nations Volunteers.

## **XI. United Nations Capital Development Fund**

66. In her address, the Executive Secretary, UNCDF, presented the midterm review of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, including the annual report on results achieved by UNCDF in 2019 (DP/2020/15).

67. Delegations commended UNCDF for its strong performance under the Executive Secretary's leadership. They welcomed the midterm review and progress against the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, especially in financial inclusion, local development and innovative finance. They valued the Fund's quick response helping LDCs address COVID-19, promoting private sector solutions to LDC development, and supporting local governments and the private sector amid rising fiscal constraints. UNCDF was critical in helping LDCs maintain development gains and build resilient economies, including through digital finance and other digital solutions. UNCDF should continue to use and expand its LDC Investment Platform and last-mile investment initiatives to: help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) offset COVID-19 impact and pursue sustainable economic recovery; tailor its strategic frameworks to mobilize resources for SDG financing in LDCs; play a greater, more effective role helping LDCs bridge the digital divide and the poor integrate better in economies; further connect entrepreneurs to international financial markets; and strengthen engagement with national and local governments to scale up UNCDF approaches.

68. A group of LDC delegations highlighted the potential funding reduction to LDCs as a result of COVID-19. UNCDF support to LDCs was especially critical now in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In addition to the Fund's provision of financial instruments, delegations welcomed its work in blended finance and hoped it would attract more partners and investments for LDCs. They appreciated the UNCDF-sponsored International Municipal Investment Fund and underscored its important role facilitating loans and guarantees and promoting local banks' role in LDC development. They welcomed UNCDF work in digital financing, which improved access to financial services for communities in LDCs, and its initiative to promote local climate adaptation, allowing more climate funding to flow to local communities.

69. Another group of delegations encouraged UNCDF to continue working in places where financial sources were scarce. UNCDF was crucial in countries worst hit by COVID-19, which threatened to jeopardize development gains. They highlighted the joint Call to Action, Remittances in Crisis: How to Keep Them Flowing, that raised awareness of the potentially devastating effect of declining remittances for millions of people due to COVID-19. Joining a cross-regional set of countries and public and private partners, UNCDF provided technical expertise and a network critical for success. They encouraged a more important UNCDF role in the United Nations system to become the principle entry point for system-wide work with

financial instruments and innovations, given its comparative advantage creating and deploying such instruments to reach the poor and tackle inequality and exclusion.

70. In response, the Executive Secretary highlighted UNCDF work helping SMEs in LDCs address and recover from COVID-19 by applying partial credit guarantee schemes that shored up SME finance and access to financing. The Fund was working with domestic banks, government and the private sector at the transaction level and through structuring financing mechanisms to promote improved SME financing. To ensure its expanding work on such initiatives, UNCDF sought to capitalize its \$50 million investment fund and channel funds that boosted local initiatives and demonstrated their viability when they lacked resources. UNCDF also bridged the digital divide by pioneering digital payments in LDCs that paved the way for local financial sectors to build and embed digital financial ecosystems in other parts of the economy. UNCDF was co-piloting with UNDP avenues to integrate digital financing in integrated national SDG-financing frameworks. That included advocating larger-scale investments to improve Internet infrastructure and connectivity. The Fund sought to scale up its work following a ‘maturity model’ – first demonstrating its work, then supporting its replication and scaling so the private sector and national and local governments could pick up successful initiatives.

71. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/17 on the midterm review of the UNCDF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, including the annual reports on results achieved in 2019.

## **UNFPA segment**

### **XII. Statement by the Executive Director and structured funding dialogue**

72. In her [statement](#), the UNFPA Executive Director said the United Nations had made great strides since its founding 75 years earlier in promoting the rights and choices of women and girls. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, threatened to slow progress and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNFPA focus as a public health organization on the frontlines had never been more essential. The Fund had moved quickly to respond to the pandemic, adjusting its programmes, operations and means of implementation. Globally, UNFPA worked to ensure continuity of sexual and reproductive health services and minimize supply-chain disruptions for family planning and protection of women, girls and adolescents. Early on, it had alerted the international community of skyrocketing gender-based violence in the pandemic’s midst, focusing on the most vulnerable women and girls, populations, regions and countries, and humanitarian contexts. In its work, the rights of women and girls were not negotiable; their sexual and reproductive health had to be safeguarded. The Fund was pleased to co-lead the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

73. COVID-19 would likely hamper progress against the three transformative results of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 to end: preventable maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning, and gender-based violence and all harmful practices. At country level, UNFPA was working with United Nations partners to deliver a coordinated health, humanitarian and socioeconomic response under the leadership of resident and humanitarian coordinators. As part of the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19, UNFPA had reached over five million women and 1.3 million adolescents and youth with sexual and reproductive health services and delivered more than one million surgical masks. It had procured services and supplies for over 107 countries and contributed to the joint United Nations tender. The Fund was preparing for a potential surge in censuses in 2021-2022, delayed due to COVID-19. UNFPA was on the humanitarian frontlines in more than 60 countries, providing life-saving sexual and reproductive health services/supplies and combatting gender-based violence. The Humanitarian Office

continued to strengthen procurement and supply-chain management, operational and human resource capacity to increase effectiveness and efficiency; it was addressing operational gaps identified in the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action, 2012-2019.

74. UNFPA was committed to an inclusive consultative process in developing its next strategic plan, which would build on evidence of what worked and how. Given COVID-19 impact on staff, UNFPA had hired a duty-of-care coordinator and staff-care support specialists in each region. It pursued an inclusive workplace, hosting internal conversations addressing staff concerns about societal racism, inequality and discrimination. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment remained a priority; having strengthened its institutional framework, the Fund was building country capacity, especially in the 14 high-risk countries. With United Nations partners, it sought to ensure sustainable interagency investment and strengthen implementing partners' accountability. UNFPA was working to make the Secretary-General's call for 'peace in the home' a reality, expanding focus on gender-based violence from awareness to accountability. The Executive Director looked forward to advancing a victim-centred approach to the humanitarian sector's response to sexual wrongdoing when UNFPA assumed the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment in January 2021. UNFPA continued to build on the momentum from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)+25; thousands had responded positively to the UNFPA series of global "What's Next?" conversations on ICPD25 and the Nairobi commitments.

75. As reflected in the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2019-2020 (DP/FPA/2020/9), the Fund had surpassed its resource targets for the previous two years. Core funding remained key to completing unfinished ICPD business and championing the rights of women and girls. The flexibility of core resources had allowed the Fund to immediately and effectively respond to COVID-19. Fast-tracking payments by donors in 2020 had put UNFPA on a strong, predictable core base. The Fund was diversifying its funding base and investing core resources in system-wide coherence to maximize collective impact. UNFPA support for and engagement in United Nations reform remained strong. In 2020, it had raised some \$410 million in co-financing from bilateral and multilateral sources, including \$53 million for COVID-19, and nearly \$23 million from the private sector in financial and in-kind contributions, including \$6 million for COVID-19. The structured funding dialogues remained an important platform to exchange ideas and link results to resources.

76. Across the Board, delegations reiterated their unwavering support for the Fund's ICPD mandate. They commended UNFPA for its quick response to the pandemic and unrelenting efforts to implement the three transformative results, working with United Nations partners in the health, humanitarian and socioeconomic responses. They strongly supported UNFPA focus on the most vulnerable, women and girls, young women, the elderly, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, people living with disabilities, and work to combat gender-based violence. They encouraged UNFPA to continue to mainstream gender-based violence in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, including through the Spotlight Initiative. They welcomed its frontline work to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in programming and corporate policy. Delegations welcomed the stabilization of core resources but expressed concern that the pandemic could impose unforeseen changes. There was a request for information on how UNFPA would respond should the pandemic induce a reduction in core funding. They encouraged UNFPA to continue to diversify its funding base and called on Member States, in a position to do so to, to increase core contributions.

77. A group of delegations emphasized the role unearmarked core funding played in the Fund's ability to respond to unforeseen events. They welcomed UNFPA efforts to improve donor recognition in contributing core funding during the pandemic and reaffirmed their commitment

to the Funding Compact and to allocating and promoting core, flexible resources. As COVID-19 would likely affect strategic plan implementation, they urged UNFPA to assess most-impacted outcomes and provide updates to the Board on steps to mitigate negative effects. Sustainable, predictable financing and diversifying core funding were key to effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Meeting the commitments of the Funding Compact remained paramount, including effective, efficient results delivery and country programme alignment to UNSDCF; they welcomed the Fund's comprehensive reporting on Funding Compact implementation. They highlighted three main points. One, they welcomed UNFPA channelling of 26 per cent of non-core resources for development through inter-agency pooled funds, a positive trend towards less strictly earmarked financing. Two, they commended UNFPA for delivering 18 per cent of development expenditures through joint activities and encouraged it to continue its dialogue with United Nations organizations, particularly DCO, to improve the operational definition of the indicator 'development expenditures delivered through joint activities'. They sought details on how UNFPA planned to harmonize that and other Funding Compact indicators, including when to expect system-wide agreement on 'joint activities'. Three, they welcomed UNFPA commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group global roll-out plan to fully implement its business operation strategy by end 2022, and its implementation in 51 per cent of country offices. They requested details on how UNFPA planned to scale up support for such efforts, given COVID-19. They sought a forward-looking approach to the structured funding dialogue that encouraged the Boards to engage in a way that informed funding decisions and implementation of strategic plans at an aggregated level. They requested further refined financial reporting and budget information, including for available resources and anticipated gaps.

78. Another group of delegations said COVID-19 was testing the outcomes of United Nations reform, making reform implementation critical for system-wide agility and for optimizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They reiterated their commitment to United Nations reform and called for greater concerted action in coordination and collaboration, efficiencies, the Funding Compact, UNSDCF, and management accountability framework. The United Nations system and resident coordinators should take a holistic approach to delivering on the Goals, aligned with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and in pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness, gender equality, empowerment of women and persons living with disabilities, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, climate and the environment. That included ensuring the organizations had sufficient humanitarian competencies and resources. They encouraged UNFPA and the United Nations system to engage with the Boards when developing their new strategic plans.

79. In individual interventions, delegations underscored the important role UNFPA was playing helping countries address COVID-19 through ongoing provision of sexual and reproductive health services and empowerment of women and girls. There was strong support for the Fund's role in humanitarian situations, while noting the recommendations of the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action, 2012-2019. Delegations underscored the importance of multilateralism in addressing the pandemic in a spirit of solidarity and maintaining efforts to achieve the Goals. South-South cooperation was highlighted as key to strong multilateral approaches and an invaluable contribution to supporting developing countries in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and the Goals. There was a request for details on how UNFPA had supported and would support countries in managing censuses throughout the pandemic. Delegations showed strong support for the Fund's co-leading of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

80. In response, the Executive Director said UNFPA had been able to count on the generosity of traditional donors, but sought to broaden its donor base, especially among emerging donors and programme countries. The Fund was working with Member States to commit to core funding and reach its target of 150 contributors. The quality of funding had improved (be it core, thematic, or

less-earmarked modalities) and inter-agency transfers had grown significantly. UNFPA was engaged with partners, including the private sector, to determine areas of convergence and better communicate its achievements. UNFPA was monitoring the pandemic's impact on operations and assessing its potential impact on the funding situation. On United Nations reform, coordinated responses to COVID-19 under resident and humanitarian coordinator leadership had been invaluable in delivering health, humanitarian and socioeconomic results. Similarly, UNFPA and other United Nations organizations were monitoring implementation of the management accountability framework at country level; survey data showed staff viewed working with resident coordinators as an enabler promoting and projecting the Fund's mandate, including in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. UNFPA was working to strengthen its operations in humanitarian settings, preparing and repositioning supplies, combating gender-based violence and collecting data. It had developed a population vulnerabilities dashboard to enable real-time decision-making. All UNFPA country programmes were framed around countries' self-defined priorities, developed in cooperation with Governments, including addressing COVID-19; women and youth-led organizations were vital to UNFPA work in building partnerships and harnessing momentum. The Fund was committed to increasing its presence and investments in programmatic delivery in West and Central Africa. UNFPA was reviewing its staffing structure to ensure management structures allowed it to fulfil its technical assistance, policy development and advocacy roles, aligned with national priorities in the region.

81. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme), stressing COVID-19 had exposed fragilities and exacerbated inequalities among populations, looked forward to working with partners to ensure the Fund's actions empowered women and girls across the globe.

82. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) underscored the Fund's unwavering commitment to United Nations reform and highlighted that UNFPA shared joint premises with United Nations organizations at a rate of 72 per cent. Joint programming was an important component of UNFPA work at country level, in addition to its cooperation and coordination with country team members. The Fund would co-lead with UNICEF the United Nations Sustainable Development Group task team on business operations to foster efficiencies in business and country offices operations.

83. The Director, Communications and Strategic Partnership, UNFPA, said the Fund had begun analyzing economic trends for 2021 and beyond to gauge the pandemic's impact on official development assistance and potential repercussions on UNFPA funding, programming and the next strategic plan. UNFPA looked forward to working with Member States to minimize the potential impacts of an economic downfall on funding. The Fund would keep the Board informed of developments through the structured funding dialogue and Board sessions.

84. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/18 on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue.

### **XIII. Evaluation**

85. The Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office, presented the annual report on the evaluation function, 2019: Report of the Director, Evaluation Office (DP/FPA/2020/3), and related annexes; as well as the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action (DP/FPA/2020/CRP.4). Both reports were followed by a management response from the Deputy Executive Director (Programme), contained in documents DP/FPA/2020/CRP.3 and DP/FPA/2019/CRP.5, respectively.

*Annual report on the evaluation function, 2019*

86. There were no comments from delegations on this report.

*Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action*

87. Delegations welcomed the evaluation's findings and recommendations. They expressed strong support for the Fund's strengthened humanitarian mandate and capacity to provide sexual and reproductive health services and protect the rights of women, girls and vulnerable groups in crisis settings. They welcomed the clarity of output-level results, especially for effective delivery of maternal and newborn health services; they encouraged UNFPA to imbed robust measurement of outcomes and impacts in the next strategic plan and conduct a review of the corporate approach to preparedness of supplies. They sought more pronounced integration of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the next strategic plan. Delegations welcomed the Fund's commitment to implementing a more systematic approach to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights at country level and encouraged it to ensure feedback on its humanitarian activities informed future planning. They recognized the Fund's work to address the special needs of people living with disabilities and looked forward to its own inclusion strategy. They requested details on how counterterrorism laws and other restrictive measures might impact UNFPA operations. As the evaluation occurred before COVID-19, they asked how UNFPA would take the recommendations forward in the new context.

88. In response, the Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office, highlighted the importance of maintaining a high-level of United Nations coordination in the evaluation function, including for humanitarian settings. The Evaluation Office was committed to and actively involved in interagency evaluation processes, ensuring the Fund's mandate was always reflected.

89. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) said UNFPA was working with UNICEF to address youth in humanitarian settings at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee level. In its youth-focused work, the Fund prioritized a multisectoral approach that it continued to follow throughout the pandemic. UNFPA was leading the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and working on youth and peacebuilding globally. It also was proactively addressing the issue of people living with disabilities in humanitarian settings.

90. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/19 on UNFPA evaluation.

#### **XIV. UNFPA country programmes and related matters**

91. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided an overview of the nine country programmes presented for Board approval, as well as 10 country programme extensions. In turn, the regional directors for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean presented the country programmes from their respective regional perspectives.

92. At the request of the Government, the country programme for China (DP/FPA/CPD/CHI/9), scheduled to take place at the second regular session 2020, was deferred to the first regular session 2021.

93. The Executive Board reviewed and approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programmes documents for Bosnia and Herzegovina (DP/FPA/CPD/BIH/3), Belarus (DP/FPA/CPD/BLR/3), Colombia (DP/FPA/CPD/COL/7), Indonesia (DP/FPA/CPD/IDN/10), Kazakhstan (DP/FPA/CPD/KAZ/5), Serbia (DP/FPA/CPD/SRB/2), including the results and resources framework for Kosovo <sup>2</sup> (DP/FPA/CPD/SRB/2/Add.1), Timor-Leste

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<sup>2</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

(DP/FPA/CPD/TLS/4), Turkey (DP/FPA/CPD/TUR/7), and Turkmenistan (DP/FPA/CPD/TKM/5).

94. The Executive Board approved the first two-year extension for the country programme for Burkina Faso, the second, six-month extension for the country programme for Madagascar, and the fifth, one-year extension for Yemen, as contained in document DP/FPA/2020/10.

95. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Algeria, Cameroon, El Salvador, Lebanon, Libya, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as contained in document DP/FPA/2020/10 and the first two-month extension for China from 1 January to 28 February 2021 (DP/FPA/2020/10/Add.1), approved by the UNFPA Executive Director.

## UNOPS segment

### XV. United Nations Office for Project Services

#### *Statement by the Executive Director*

96. Presenting the midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 (DP/OPS/2020/5), the Executive Director highlighted UNOPS work to support national efforts to tackle COVID-19, focused on public health and economic recovery, while implementing its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. UNOPS had delivered over \$400 million to address the pandemic in over 50 countries, funded by some 40 partners. UNOPS emergency assistance included equipping health workers and building temporary health infrastructure; its longer-term support focused on strengthening national health systems and mitigating socioeconomic impact. UNOPS actively participated in the United Nations COVID-19 Supply Chain Taskforce. In helping countries build the capacity of public procurement institutions, UNOPS was working with the Government of Mexico and World Health Organization to support national procurement of medicines and medical supplies, an initiative it sought to expand and replicate. She also presented the annual statistical report on the procurement activities of the United Nations system, 2019 (DP/OPS/2019/6).

97. The Executive Director highlighted that the pandemic had unfolded on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, and its socioeconomic impact on women was devastating. Gender equality had to be at the centre of recovery efforts. UNOPS was working to ensure equal opportunities for women-owned businesses and promoting gender-sensitive infrastructure and gender parity in its workforce. Women currently represented 45 per cent of UNOPS personnel and 56 per cent of senior management; it sought to reach 47 per cent by end 2020. Together with climate action and gender equality, COVID-19 recovery promised a more equal, inclusive, sustainable world. That meant doing things differently. Remote working had made business continuity possible for many; UNOPS was benefitting from its decision to move to cloud, adopt enterprise technologies and embrace technological change. The implications for the United Nations were profound. It was crucial to redefine leadership in a virtual world, adapt skills and organizational cultures, scale up technology and become more flexible.

98. Delegations welcomed UNOPS progress against the strategic plan and expressed their commitment to its unique mandate within the United Nations system for sustainable procurement, financial management and infrastructure. They valued its strong sustainable project management and technical expertise, including in fragile and conflict-affected areas, and welcomed its successful demand-driven, self-financed business model and actions to mainstream gender across programmes. UNOPS should continue to develop its technical expertise and client-oriented, entrepreneurial culture. They urged it to continue to work in line with developing countries' self-defined priorities, increasing procurement efficiency in project management, reducing transaction

costs, and enhancing risk management and oversight. They welcomed UNOPS commitment to United Nations reform and requested an update on applying the resident coordinator system levy on tightly earmarked grants defined as ‘contributions’ by funding partners.

99. Delegations commended UNOPS for its central role in the global COVID-19 response, focused on socioeconomic recovery and accessing medical supplies through sustainable procurement. They welcomed its health centre renovation work aligned with sustainable infrastructure principles and community engagement. UNOPS capacitating role in helping to organize the Our Ocean 2020 conference in Palau, with funding from the India-United Nations Development Partnerships Fund, was highlighted, along with its transformative work in Mexico with the national Institute of Health and Well-being. Such South-South demand-driven development initiatives were having impact across the globe. They sought details on how UNOPS planned to adapt its strategies in the COVID-19 environment, given the need for alternative sources of financing, and how it would reflect that in the new strategic plan. They highlighted the impact of the Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investment (S3I) initiative at country level and sought updates on how UNOPS planned to support the twin United Nations initiatives: Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond and Recovering Better for Sustainability.

100. In response, the Executive Director said UNOPS used the midterm review to revisit its commitment to building awareness of its offer and diversifying its partnership and funding approaches. COVID-19 had posed an unforeseen challenge and UNOPS had adapted quickly, deepening existing and building new partnerships, thanks to its solid financial standing and lessons learned. Noting demand for its services had remained stable, UNOPS aimed to keep United Nations and partners informed of its changing portfolio offer. Under her chairmanship, the High-level Committee on Management was exploring future work challenges for the United Nations system, an area where UNOPS offered expertise in shared services, helping ensure greater cost efficiency. COVID-19 had raised greater interest in UNOPS procurement services, including in the area of public procurement. UNOPS was on track applying the resident coordinator system levy and would implement new DCO guidelines in 2021, facilitating levy payments as applicable.

101. The Chief Executive, UNOPS S3I initiative, said the biggest S3I involvement had been in affordable housing, whose pipeline exceeded 1.3 million in at least eight countries. While health and infrastructure constituted a new domain for S3I, UNOPS anticipated working in that field with Governments and the private sector. To address the potential socioeconomic downturn of COVID-19, UNOPS focused on infrastructure investments, which built infrastructure and contributed to job creation and economic growth. In this, UNOPS aimed to determine affordability and took a human rights-based approach, in line with nationally defined priorities. He encouraged Member States in a position to do so to participate in such projects, as co-implementers and financial supporters.

102. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/20 on the United Nations Office for Project Services.

## **XVI. Other matters**

*Address by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council*

103. In her address, the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council underscored the challenges staff faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Management and staff representatives had acted together to meet personnel needs and strengthen commitment. The Chairperson however highlighted that the number of mental health issues had risen. That included an increase in domestic violence. Further actions were necessary to mitigate sources of stress and foster trust, including: (a) building an inclusive workplace and revising recruitment practices for

equal opportunities; (b) harmonizing contract modalities reflecting a One United Nations, interagency mobility, and ‘duty of care’ for staff and non-staff; (c) recognizing performance and promotion, re-evaluating how the organization recognized personnel, using UNOPS as a model; and (d) revising restructuring processes for fairness, especially those that proceeded despite the pandemic.

104. There were no comments from delegations on this item.

105. The Executive Board heard a statement by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council.

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