



United Nations

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

**Report of the Executive Board on its work
during 2020***

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Note

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Part one
First regular session 2020

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 3 to 6 February 2020**

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/DCP/COD/3](#)), Iraq ([DP/DCP/IRQ/3](#)), Mali ([DP/DCP/MLI/4](#)), Kuwait ([DP/DCP/KWT/3](#)) and Paraguay ([DP/DCP/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 25th 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 25th 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.

Part two
Annual session 2020

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 3 to 5 June 2020**

I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session 2020 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held virtually, on an exceptional basis, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 3 to 5 June 2020.
2. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its annual session 2020 (DP/2020/L.2), as orally amended, and approved the report of the first regular session 2020 (DP/2020/6).
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the annual session 2020 appeared in document DP/2020/19, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2020/9 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2020:

Second regular session 2020: 31 August to 4 September 2020.

Statement by the President of the Board

5. In his opening remarks, the President of the Executive Board expressed thanks to the Board for choosing to pursue its important work, despite the challenges of working and meeting virtually during the COVID-19 crisis. He highlighted the strong cooperation of Bureau and Board members, the secretariat, and the management and staff of the organizations, who came together and allowed the Board to continue to provide its oversight and guidance. He was especially inspired by the organizations' efficient, effective coordination at country level, pursuing United Nations reform and culling important lessons from the COVID-19 crisis. Those lessons, and the issues that arose from them, would be taken up by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in 2020, which would assess and allow the organizations to examine their effectiveness and efficiency in a new light, while the scheduled evaluation processes would enable closer assessment of results. In drafting the decisions for the session, the Board took an innovative approach, beginning the process early and ensuring the same level of inputs and outcomes that took place in normal Board settings. The President expressed his solidarity with all countries and peoples that had suffered during the COVID-19 crisis and stressed the importance of the session's joint segment, calling on the organizations to focus on the practicalities at country level when providing joint updates on COVID-19 to the Board.

Joint segment

II. Joint update on the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS response to the COVID-19 crisis in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

6. In their statements to the Board, the UNDP Administrator, the UNFPA Executive Director, and the UNOPS Executive Director in turn reflected on the challenges and lessons learned the United Nations development system encountered in its collective efforts to ensure an integrated system-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic within the larger context of continued implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

7. The UNDP Administrator reflected on the enabling factors and main challenges that came to light in efforts to devise an effective response to COVID-19. He highlighted in particular the flexibility, agility, speed, innovation and ability of the United Nations development system and UNDP to re-programme resources in responding to the crisis and in maintaining business continuity. United Nations system organizations were able to complement each other's work through, for example, procurement, while continuing to pursue integrated system-wide approaches. For its part, UNDP had quickly established a COVID-19 Rapid Response Facility that complemented the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19, which rallied country teams around the leadership of the resident coordinators and served as a first validation of United Nations reform. As of June 2020, UNDP had published 63 country-level socioeconomic assessments and five regional assessments from across the globe. Core and flexible funding remained a critical enabling factor that gave UNDP and other United Nations organizations the flexibility and agility to respond and provide on-demand support. Similarly, pooled funding and trust funds, such as the Global United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, incentivized joint efforts across the system.

8. The UNFPA Executive Director underscored how COVID-19 had devastatingly brought to the fore inequalities and vulnerabilities that needed to be urgently addressed to achieve the vision of the ICPD programme of action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNFPA, together with its United Nations development system partners, had been at the forefront of efforts to achieve that vision; COVID-19 had galvanized the United Nations for adolescent girls, pregnant women, and frontline health workers. The resident coordinators were proving to be leaders and interlocutors for the United Nations system. That coordinated response was tremendously important in ensuring the health and safety of women and girls. UNFPA had estimated that the pandemic could result in millions more cases of gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and unintended pregnancy. With a global presence, UNFPA was working with country teams to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights through scaled-up, re-purposed joint initiatives and mechanisms during crisis. That included leveraging partnerships with international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society. Multi-year core funding was needed to support rapid responses that saved lives. To build back better and reach the Goals, there was a need to go much further to advance gender equality and women's rights. The next quadrennial comprehensive policy review presented an opportunity for Member States to provide guidance on the types of integrated policy and programmatic support the United Nations system should provide to countries to accelerate implementation of the Goals within the COVID-19 context.

9. The UNOPS Executive Director stated that the organization had quickly set up a COVID-19 task force to respond to the crisis. UNOPS contribution to addressing COVID-19 was project-based, and it had joined forces with other United Nations organizations, working with ministries of health under resident coordinators' leadership to build and equip isolation centres. It was collaborating with the international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, supporting Governments in their COVID-19 response, providing medical equipment, protective supplies and vehicles. Total support had already reached \$50 million. The UNOPS multi-country office business model allowed it to ensure cost-efficient service delivery, which it expanded and contracted according to demand. UNOPS supported small island developing states (SIDS) with funding through the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and through the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. System-wide approaches, critical to making the United Nations better prepared to respond to crises, required working closer with the private sector to combine resources, innovation and skills, for which UNOPS had a key facilitating

role. As part of its COVID-19 response, UNOPS focused on financing sustainable infrastructure, as COVID-19 highlighted that such investments were key to achieving the Goals and helping countries cope with crises.

10. In overall comments, Board members commended the organizations and the United Nations system for their collaborative efforts and welcomed the enhanced coordinated action in delivering on joint commitments for the Sustainable Development Goals and improving United Nations efficiency and effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its level of impact on all countries demonstrated how existing efforts had to ensure no one was left behind. An integrated response to strengthen resilience and address the risks and underlying causes of conflict was critical. The collective response had to be conflict-sensitive and grounded in human rights-based approaches and sustainably deliver COVID-19 responses that were collaborative and innovative and that minimized overlap and duplication.

11. A cross-regional group of delegations, welcoming the Secretary-General's push to link reform implementation to the COVID-19 response, underscored the need to reinforce and deliver on joint commitments, including strengthening universal health coverage and establishing mechanisms to prevent future pandemics and bolster emergency planning and preparedness. They urged the organizations to work together through their comparative advantages and with multilateral actors to fully implement the Strategic Preparedness Response Plan, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, and the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19. They stressed resident coordinators' critical role in facilitating and ensuring coordinated, harmonized country team responses that safeguarded progress towards the Goals, and they encouraged inter-agency coordination, using joint proposals through coordinated funding mechanisms. They pointed to the need to revisit emergency actions to address the COVID-19 crisis within longer-term plans focused on strengthening the global supply chain for medicine, vaccines and medical equipment. The group highlighted that recovery measures had to strengthen resilience and sustainability through effective policies that included gender perspectives and investments that contributed to realizing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. They requested continuity of essential health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, and stressed the importance of ensuring that internationally recognized human rights, including the right to health, were respected, protected and progressively realized during the COVID-19 crisis. They sought the continuation of joint conflict-sensitive programming based on shared risk and needs assessments, along with reprioritization of programmes and resources in consultation with donors and programme countries. They commended the resilience and commitment of United Nations development and humanitarian workers who assisted vulnerable populations and attempted to reach the furthest behind first. They called on the organizations to ensure their actions and behaviours remained grounded in respect for human rights, gender equality and the responsibility 'to do no harm', in line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, including upholding commitments and international standards to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse.

12. Another group of delegations called on UNDP and UNFPA to scale up implementation of their Funding Compact commitments and pursue in-depth discussions on how the midterm reviews of their strategic plans could help them operate effectively, deliver programme results and meet programme countries' needs. They welcomed progress in achieving greater transparency and accountability and were encouraged by the strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the international financial institutions in the COVID-19 response. They called on UNDP and UNFPA to continue pursuing targets related to joint programming and requested more effective collaboration among them and with other stakeholders and partners to

achieve programme delivery with real impact at country level. They welcomed the UNFPA update on how it included system-wide collaboration and results in the performance review of country and regional office representatives and encouraged UNDP and UNFPA to continue putting forward strong candidates for the resident coordinator pool. In referring to the Secretary-General's 2020 report on implementation of General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review ([A/75/79](#)), the group urged the organizations to coordinate and ensure all country and regional team members received consistent messaging and support for reforms and strengthen the consistency of guidance from the executive leadership of United Nations Sustainable Development Group to their country representatives. They urged UNDP and UNFPA to continue to support resident coordinators and country teams in leveraging non-resident agencies' knowledge and expertise and called on UNDP and UNFPA to continue ongoing efforts to realize efficiencies, increase investments in programme activities and deliver results in programme countries. They were pleased that UNFPA had reflected its System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) 2.0 compliance in its integrated results and resources framework and welcomed its commitment to develop strategies to address climate change and leave no one behind, as well as its plans to evaluate its use of the human rights-based approach. They encouraged UNDP to follow that example and to make all programmes conflict-sensitive, given that Goal 16 continued to lag.

13. In other interventions, delegations urged that any COVID-19 vaccine be considered a public good and made accessible to all countries, regardless of level of development. They encouraged continued COVID-19 integrated support to developing countries, alongside adoption of best practices and solutions that could be taken to scale, and reiterated the need for accelerated, coordinated approaches that bolstered supply chains, improved prevention, preparedness and resilience, and reinforced strong partnerships. There was a call for the immediate mobilization of resources for the Health in Africa Fund to the required amount of \$15 billion.

14. In response, the UNOPS Executive Director underscored the value of United Nations system-wide cooperation and partnerships with all stakeholders. UNOPS sought to build on its comparative advantages when working with partners and pursued a differentiated approach to development solutions based on country-driven demand and context. It was committed to working with and supporting resident coordinators and endeavoured to add value to country teams, bringing its expertise in efficiency and rapid response within its mandated areas of procurement and infrastructure. Key in those efforts was ensuring the United Nations system was prepared to deliver and ensure the long-term social, economic recovery together with partners.

15. The UNFPA Executive Director reiterated the importance of gender when pursuing rights and inclusion and highlighted the Fund's work with older persons and ageing populations hit hardest by COVID-19. She reinforced that gender action had to include groups that experienced structural inequality, such as older persons, people living with disabilities and indigenous peoples, and address issues of empowerment. UNFPA was repurposing programme funds to ensure equitable distribution of contraceptives, medicine, health services and supplies to the last mile. The Fund, in collaboration with United Nations organizations, had mobilized additional resources for sexual and reproductive health medicine and services, emergency interagency reproductive health kits, and personal protective equipment. At country level, UNFPA was working with stakeholders in developing joint proposals for potential donors in response to evolving country needs to speed up delivery. On protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, UNFPA had significantly contributed to inter-agency collaboration and taken the lead on several activities. She pointed out that resident coordinators had been designated feedback providers in the UNFPA performance

appraisal system even before of resolution [72/279](#). And UNFPA representatives were part of resident coordinator and country team assessments, in line with the new resident coordinator performance mechanism. She highlighted that joint funding constituted the Fund's largest funding source.

16. The UNDP Administrator highlighted that UNDP delivered its COVID-19-related activities through intense, consistent system-wide coordination and integration, including through its role in country teams. The United Nations system was collaborating actively at all levels, including to address the socioeconomic response, in the face of an enormous challenge to deliver practical, actionable, quickly available services to countries. That included efforts to elaborate and develop integrated national financing frameworks, critical tools allowing countries to gauge their potential scope of support from international partners, investors and the United Nations system. UNDP was actively collaborating with UNFPA and UN-Women, building on the gender dimensions integral to its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, signature solutions and commitments under SWAP. Expressing concern over statements regarding UNDP climate change work, he underscored the immense investment UNDP had already brought to the United Nations system's climate work, its leadership in supporting the system-wide Climate Promise during the Climate Action Summit 2019, its support to least developed countries (LDCs), and wider climate-focused approach. He reiterated UNDP concerns that the rigid definitional parameters of 'joint programming' did not make it possible to capture the true level of UNDP joint programming; UNDP was working with the United Nations Development Cooperation Office to rectify that discrepancy. UNDP support to reform had been consistent, systematic and objectively documented in successive reports. It was evidenced in the high numbers of its seconded staff to the resident coordinator system (close to half of the existing cadre of resident coordinators, including a high number of women and candidates from the South), a testimony to its commitment to diversity and the success of the resident coordinator system more broadly. As part of the system-wide response, UNDP offered much needed infrastructure, capability and presence on the ground in the face of enormous country-level needs, which only underscored the importance of having the means to deliver. The Administrator stressed the close attention UNDP senior management had paid to United Nations reform throughout 2019 and in ensuring effective, regular communication to field leadership on the matter, through webinars, dedicated information sessions, and periodical communications from headquarters.

17. The Executive Board took note of the joint update on the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS response to COVID-19 crisis in the context of the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

III. Internal audit and investigation

18. The Executive Board discussion of the joint item on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation activities in 2019, and the management responses, was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled to take place at the second regular session in September 2020.

IV. Ethics

19. The Executive Board discussion of the joint item on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS activities for 2019, and the management responses, was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled to take place at the second regular session in September 2020.

UNDP segment

V. Interactive dialogue with the UNDP Administrator and midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2019

VI. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

VII. Gender equality in UNDP

20. In his statement ([available on the Executive Board website](#)), the Administrator, UNDP, reflected on UNDP progress – including in the context of the COVID-19 crisis – as reflected in the midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including his annual report for 2019 (DP/2020/8). In the plan’s first two years, UNDP had demonstrated its effectiveness in helping countries reduce poverty and inequality and tackle climate change, for example, redoubling support to countries to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals as a key part of the United Nations development system response. The ambitious agenda to make UNDP reform-ready and future-focused was well underway and progress on track. The midterm review had substantiated that the full value of results achieved across the signature solutions was being unlocked through integrated, whole-of-society approaches to development complexities at scale, as embodied in #NextGenUNDP.

21. In the plan’s first two years, UNDP had helped governments use multidimensional poverty indices to address a new generation of inequalities. As a trusted partner, it supported stronger human rights and rule of law systems in over 70 countries and worked to prevent violent extremism. It promoted closer collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors and demonstrated the benefits of an integrated approach in fragile contexts. The UNDP nature-climate portfolio included helping countries access \$1 billion in vertical funds and working with SIDS on integrated solutions to drive the blue economy, digital transformation and climate action. It had helped ensure that 1.4 million women-headed households (and 1.2 million in rural areas) gained access to clean, affordable energy, and was actively promoting solar energy in health facilities and helping countries undertake a green energy transition. UNDP had worked with countries to tackle gender-based violence, further integrate gender into environmental policies, and strengthen women’s leadership in natural resource management. Going forward, UNDP would continue to invigorate efforts to enhance women’s leadership in crisis prevention and recovery and intensify efforts to promote women’s agency, upending patriarchal social norms, strengthening inclusive institutions, and ensuring a digital transformation that worked for everyone.

22. On corporate efficiency and effectiveness, UNDP had balanced its books for three consecutive years, streamlined 150 business processes, and invested in business model improvements, reining in costs and increasing productivity, representing approximately \$240 million in additional resources for development in 2018–2019. UNDP had invested in a talented, diverse, results-focused workforce through its People for 2030 strategy. Its senior leadership positions globally were gender-balanced and geographically diverse. It maintained gender parity among staff, though parity in middle management and among staff in programme countries needed improvement. UNDP had performed well on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) 2.0 and was a high scorer in the 2020 global health 50/50 gender and health index. It had improved its working culture through concrete actions to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

23. UNDP remained the single largest United Nations contributor to the resident coordinator system and the operational backbone of the United Nations development system, providing payroll, travel and procurement services to entities across the United Nations development system, with its services to the resident coordinator system rated at 4.2 out of 5 stars. UNDP had set up accelerator labs in more than 70 countries and the Sustainable Development Goals Finance Sector Hub to bring coherence and scale to its financing work, including with United Nations partners and the European Union to advance integrated national financing frameworks. UNDP was working with the private sector and investors through Sustainable Development Goals investment tool known as ‘SDG Impact’.

24. The UNDP digital strategy was testing new programmes in the field while enhancing organizational digital literacy. A month before the annual session 2020, UNDP had launched a new information technology strategy to help accelerate its digital transformation. In response to demand, UNDP was moving from a project to a portfolio-based approach, designed to deliver whole-of-society solutions.

25. The Administrator underscored that the COVID-19 crisis was a litmus test for the United Nations development system’s commitment to deliver better, quicker and more effectively. As part of UNDP efforts to help countries prepare, respond and recover, UNDP would focus on four main areas identified based on partners’ demand: *governance* – building a new social contract; *social protection* – uprooting inequalities; *a green economy* – restoring the balance between people and planet; and *digital disruption and innovation* – closing the internet access gap and investing in digitalization and innovation architecture. UNDP would redouble its efforts to deliver development results at speed and scale, including by raising the ambition level of nearly all its development results targets. And its COVID-19 response would be a gravitational feature of the rest of this strategic plan period and, alongside climate change, would be key in defining the context for the next plan.

26. A group of delegations reiterated its endorsement of the UNDP core mandate to support national efforts to achieve the Goals in line with national priorities. Noting the potential reverse in development gains, exacerbation of inequalities, and disproportionate impact on the vulnerable due to COVID-19, the group underscored UNDP flexibility – as part of a system-wide response to help developing countries deal with the human aspects of the response and to recover in a more resilient way. Stressing the overarching objective to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, the group called for continued use of integrated approaches and collective action and urged UNDP to play a central role in assisting developing countries to strengthen its policies and institutional capacities. They called on UNDP to continue to coordinate its development work within the United Nations system, while considering the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Recognizing progress implementing the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, they urged UNDP to build on lessons learned in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. They reaffirmed the importance of sufficient, predictable core resources as key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and responding to changing development conditions. They stressed the need for countries to meet their official development assistance commitments. The group underscored the importance of South-South cooperation and the role of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, stressing that South-South cooperation was not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.

27. A second group of delegations from the least developed countries concurred that COVID-19 had exacerbated pre-existing challenges and would negatively impact development gains in developing countries, especially in LDCs. They recognized the need for a flexible, responsive United Nations system able to address emerging challenges. They looked forward to scaled-up UNDP support to LDCs, especially considering COVID-19, to ensure LDCs were not left behind. UNDP would have to

provide additional focus to LDCs to address poverty and build resilience, as they were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. UNDP needed to reorient its business model to contribute to building better, greener and resilient societies after COVID-19. The group reiterated the importance of United Nations reform and commended UNDP for undertaking various reform measures to make itself fit for purpose. They looked forward to continued coordination vertically and horizontally within UNDP and among United Nations system organizations and noted that the focus of the strategic plan was still highly relevant in the post-COVID 19 context.

28. A third group of delegations from the small island developing states underscored the central role of UNDP in the COVID-19 crisis in connecting countries to resources and acting as the anchor for implementation of development-focused recovery with poverty alleviation at its centre. The SIDS continued to call on the international community to promote operational and financial solutions to manage external shocks and address the multiplicity of complex environmental challenges they faced. They called on UNDP to address the negative effects of SIDS designation as middle and high-income countries so they could access World Bank and International Monetary Fund relief efforts. That should be accompanied by an upward trend in core-funded activities allowing UNDP the flexibility and rapidity to respond to countries' needs. And as part of United Nations reform and the Funding Compact, UNDP should continue to broaden its funding base through new partnerships and pursue new directions in resource mobilization while ensuring transparency and accountability. They called on UNDP to ensure gender balance and regional representations within its recruitment processes and to be prepared to rapidly respond to natural disasters in SIDS regions.

29. A fourth group of delegations highlighted development setbacks resulting from COVID-19, including by referring to 2020 UNDP report, *COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery*, which the group said showed a decline in human development for the first time since the concept of human development had been introduced in 1990. The group encouraged UNDP to continue to collaborate with development partners in and beyond the United Nations system to ensure a strategic, prioritized, catalytic global response. Effective actions had to be tailored to specific contexts and consider the comparative advantages of United Nations organizations and other multilateral actors, for which strong UNDP leadership and coordination was essential. They strongly supported the UNDP lead technical role in the United Nations socioeconomic response and recovery efforts and its unique position to advance the system-wide efforts to help countries build back better and greener. A broad development agenda remained fundamental, as did effectively managing the crisis's short and long-term socioeconomic effects, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable. That included strengthening human rights and democracy, gender equality, climate action, opportunities for decent work, social protection and education, and maintaining free trade and free flow of goods. Success demanded close dialogue with people and communities to ensure social cohesion and sustainability.

30. A fifth group of delegations welcomed the positive results on gender and strong UNDP commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. As lead agency for the socioeconomic response, UNDP should work to shift towards more transformative interventions that address structural barriers. UNDP COVID-19-related activities should be informed by gender analysis, use data disaggregated by gender, and prioritize protection and support to the most vulnerable. Gender equality and women's empowerment required system-wide approaches and collaboration to halt deepening inequalities resulting from the pandemic and rising levels of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. The group looked forward to a continuing trend toward gender-responsive staff performance management, as well as

more offices using gender equality strategies. They encouraged UNDP and Member States to take action to reach the gender equality strategy's funding targets and looked forward to a steep increase in the number of country offices reporting on promoting women's leadership in crisis recovery mechanisms and on gender indicators.

31. A sixth group of delegations reasserted that the common chapter was developed based on the principle that the 2030 Agenda was the overarching framework to guide work across the United Nations development system. They stressed that the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) stated that United Nations development system entities should reflect their contributions to the 2030 Agenda in their strategic plans, and they urged that the common chapter provide a clear outline for the organizations to undertake integrated approaches toward achievement of the Goals in the context of United Nations reform. Operationalizing the common chapter remained a priority. They supported ongoing United Nations system efforts to concretely formulate integrated, collaborative, reformed results as part of system-wide comprehensive support at country level. They sought clarity on where synergies lay and how they were being leveraged for coordinated, efficient country teams to support resident coordinators.

32. In other interventions, individual delegations stressed the need to reprioritize short and long-term actions as part of an integrated, whole-of-society approach to maintain development gains in the context of COVID-19. There was strong support for UNDP priority assistance to the most fragile states, especially in Africa; leadership on the climate front and biodiversity conservation; continued critical support to the resident coordinator system, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis; and the central UNDP role in helping to align financing flows for the pandemic response and 2030 Agenda. While some delegations recognized the continued UNDP commitment to United Nations development system reform, concern was however raised that United Nations organizations could show greater commitment to the reform agenda. There was a renewed call to realize universal health coverage in view of COVID-19's impact on fragile health systems and as part of increased focus on human security. UNDP should use its integrated approach to help countries build social safety nets and strengthen governments' crisis management capacities. There was a call for UNDP to tackle the root causes of inequalities, including on gender, and use its digital strategy to redress inequalities. There was interest in enhanced UNDP partnerships with the international financial institutions on grant and loan implementation, its dialogue on debt restructuring based on vulnerability, and use of a budget marker to ensure traceability and transparency of COVID-19 expenditures.

33. In response, the Administrator reiterated the UNDP commitment to helping countries manage the pandemic through integrated, whole-of-society, people-centred solutions focused on poverty eradication and identifying the most vulnerable. Gender disaggregated data was key in those efforts, alongside digital technologies to track gender-focused data. On the funding front, UNDP had met 95 per cent of its strategic plan core funding target and had tentatively reversed a decade long trend of declining core, which led to more targeted, effective delivery. Lack of guaranteed funding and core contributions, however, meant UNDP remained vulnerable. He noted that 60 per cent of UNDP programme resources was dedicated to LDCs, underscoring its commitment to prioritizing LDC needs, including through the Green Climate Fund. In 2019, UNDP had begun developing its climate finance offer focused on the blue economy, climate change and digital transformation, with targeted investments in the SIDS, whose middle-income status remained a challenge – use of the per capita gross domestic product threshold consistently proved unrealistic in capturing countries' vulnerability. Forty-six per cent of UNDP expenditures was dedicated to its work in crisis settings, underlining its commitment to working in the most difficult contexts, engagement in the Rapid

Response Facility, and deployment of accelerator labs in crisis-afflicted countries. In responding to the COVID-19 crisis, UNDP was guided by the Goals and the 2030 Agenda, as it enhanced its work on governance, social protection, the green economy, and digital disruption and innovation in response to growing country demand. The digital operating universe and digitalization were changing how UNDP functioned and delivered through, for example, digital finance. UNDP was working with the United Nations Capital Development Fund on the digital dimension to finance and development that was helping countries develop digital infrastructure. UNDP continued to play a critical role in implementing United Nations development reform and in driving a coordinated system-wide response, in particular through its support to the resident coordinator system. While integral to the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the common chapter was foremost an accountability tool through which the four organizations reported on their commitments. In all those areas, UNDP remained the trusted partner of governments, with a vast country-level presence able to work with countries on the most difficult development challenges.

34. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Special Advisor to the Administrator reaffirmed the UNDP two-pronged approach to simultaneously address countries' short and long-term development challenges. The UNDP impact assessment had shown that the contraction of fiscal, political and civic space at country level was impeding recovery efforts. As a result, UNDP was working to ensure countries had more development finance and liquidity, promoting national adoption of integrated national financing frameworks, which were especially beneficial to low and middle-income countries; second, UNDP was investing in digitalization to fast-track acceleration of recovery, which had proven useful in tracking COVID-19.

35. The Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted that in LDCs UNDP was concentrating its demand-driven COVID-19 response on socioeconomic recovery, specifically with regard to *employment*, supporting micro and small enterprises to access finance and reconnect to supply chains severed due to the pandemic; *social protection* in the wake of job losses; *digital expansion* to deliver services and facilitate health and energy access; and *natural resources* and *renewable energy*, bringing climate and nature-based responses to the recovery efforts.

36. The Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis was bringing to the fore and exacerbating national structural inadequacies and challenges, such as inequalities and citizens' lack of trust in the effectiveness of governance. The UNDP response was focused on vulnerable groups, the pandemic's social costs, and health-related challenges. That included working to broaden the registries for cash and in-kind transfers, bridging the knowledge gap to understand how social and mobility patterns were exacerbating the vulnerabilities of certain groups, and monitoring the effectiveness of health care measures, including strengthening governments' COVID-19 response and capacity. In those efforts, UNDP was working closely with the World Bank and the private sector as well.

37. The Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, underscored the immediate socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, which had exacerbated pre-existing Ebola-related conditions and set back recovery from other health-related pandemics, all of which required urgent attention. The pandemic offered an opportunity to address the widespread lack of social protection schemes by setting up national, inclusive systems. Another opportunity lay within the African free trade area by creating a new lifeline of production in goods and services, especially those related to pandemics.

38. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/4 on the midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2019.

39. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/5 on the midterm review of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018–2021.

40. The Executive Board took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2018–2021 ([DP/2020/11](#)).

VIII. Human Development Report

41. The Director, Human Development Report Office, presented an oral report on the *Human Development Report 2020* consultations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [57/264](#), within the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. Delegations welcomed the report's theme of expanding human freedoms in balance with the planet, which was aligned with the human security approach. In interventions, they expressed concern with the reported regression in human development, reflected in the human development index, which amounted to a human security crisis. Clarification was sought on how the potential blurring of country categories and loss of development gains, due to COVID-19, might impact the analyses and matrices used in the report, especially regarding issues such as health care and debt relief. For over 30 years, the report's data and analyses had helped countries rethink their interventions and policy areas and mobilize partnerships and expertise in creating a multidimensional approach to human development and poverty eradication through the lenses of inequality and vulnerability. In that light, delegations looked forward to seeing that approach applied in the voluntary national reviews and country programmes. They encouraged the office to deploy technology in an accessible way through mobile applications to ensure its continued digital presence. There sought to know with whom the office was coordinating within the United Nations system to gather information from country teams for use in impact analyses, in particular for socioeconomic analyses.

43. The Director, Human Development Report Office, said the report's theme spoke to the interconnectedness of human, climate and biodiversity challenges, as attested by COVID-19 transmission. The office's work in 2020 focused on UNDP leadership in the context of the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19, which had informed the choice of indicators and analysis and was linked to country-level assessments through the resident coordinators system. The reported regression in human development was based on three components used to estimate the pandemic's effect on standards of living, health and education. The findings showed an unprecedented shock in real time to human development, owing to the pandemic's simultaneous impact in all three sectors globally. The office quickly mobilized to gather evidence and provide information that helped to inform the socioeconomic recovery response. Human security was crucial in the response and would be central to the subsequent report in 2021. At national level, regarding voluntary national reviews, the office encouraged the use of national human development reports to help in thinking about recovery. The office was actively investing in digital transformation and use of mobile applications, while recognizing that many people across the world lacked Internet connectivity.

44. The Executive Board took note of the update by the secretariat on consultations on the *Human Development Report*.

IX. UNDP country programmes and related matters

45. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, provided an overview of the country programme documents and the country programme extensions up for Board approval. In turn, the Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, presented the country programme documents for Ethiopia and South Africa, as well as the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Algeria, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

46. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme document for Ethiopia ([DP/DCP/ETH/4](#)) and the country programme document for South Africa ([DP/DCP/ZAF/3](#)).

47. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Algeria, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as approved by the Administrator, and presented in document [DP/2020/12](#).

X. Evaluation

48. The Executive Board discussion of this UNDP item on the annual report on evaluation 2019 was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled to take place at the second regular session in September 2020.

XI. United Nations Volunteers

49. The Executive Board discussion of this item on the annual report of the UNDP Administrator on United Nations Volunteers was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled to take place at the second regular session in September 2020.

XII. United Nations Capital Development Fund

50. The Executive Board discussion of this item on the midterm review of the United Nations Capital Development Fund Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, including the annual report on results achieved in 2019, was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled for the second regular session in September 2020.

UNFPA segment

XIII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report

XIV. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

51. In her statement, the Executive Director underscored how, with the Board's support and counsel, UNFPA had sharpened its purpose with a results orientation that propelled its mandate forward during the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals. Together with its partners, the Fund was mobilizing the resources and political will to help enable women to determine their own paths and girls to transform their lives. That was what was proven to happen when women and girls had access to sexual and reproductive health and could exercise their reproductive rights. UNFPA staff and partners were focused on the three transformative results: zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices. UNFPA efforts were based on high-quality population data to ensure no woman or girl was

left behind. The results speak for themselves, as evidenced in her report on the implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (DP/FPA/2020/4, Part I). As part of its commitment to maximum transparency and accountability, UNFPA was making its country-level strategic plan results publicly available on its online results portal, and a subsequent publication detailing UNFPA work in 150 countries in 2019, including new initiatives to collect data, increase the visibility of vulnerable populations, promote the adoption of new laws and policies to secure the rights and choices for marginalized women and young people, and drive achievements in SIDS.

52. Noting the transparent and consultative process of the midterm review process, she highlighted that the review had validated the Fund's strategic direction and confirmed that UNFPA was on track towards achieving its strategic plan results. The review focused on how to ensure continued progress; the "what" – or results in terms of goal, outcome, and outputs – remained as relevant as ever to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) programme of action. Going forward, UNFPA was stepping up efforts to address demands for quality population data and would invest in further understanding and developing strategies for population ageing, low fertility, climate change and mental health in humanitarian settings. The midterm review showed that the UNFPA humanitarian office was successfully meeting the ever-growing need for sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, including mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings. In 2019, UNFPA humanitarian assistance had reached over 19 million people in 64 countries. UNFPA had laid the foundation for the next strategic plan, and looked forward to another consultative process, tailored to country objectives and based on lessons learned, including experiences from the COVID-19 response.

53. For its part, the midterm review of the integrated budget, 2018–2021 (DP/FPA/2020/5) focused on making the right investments to allow UNFPA to scale up and accelerate implementation over the remaining two years of the strategic plan. The Executive Director outlined the ways in which prudent and strategic investments could strengthen UNFPA capacities in advocacy, resource mobilization and risk management, and bolster investments in the capacities of the LDCs, which benefitted from the largest proportion of total resources. The majority of integrated budget resources, \$3.2 billion or around 82 per cent, would go directly to programmes; UNFPA would increase investment in evaluation and oversight functions, as a priority.

54. The Executive Director underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated inequalities that likely affected women and girls the most. For every six-month period of COVID-19 lockdown, more than 47 million women could lose access to contraception; UNFPA-projected seven million unintended pregnancies; and 31 million additional cases of gender-based violence. UNFPA had focused its COVID-19 response on strengthening health-care systems to help 'build back better' under the framework of an integrated United Nations response and had launched the revised UNFPA Global COVID-19 Response Plan. The funding requirement for the global COVID-19 response to year end 2020 was now estimated at \$370 million. Already \$93.5 million had been mobilized, allocated or repurposed. Quality, multi-year core was more important than ever. Core funding gave UNFPA the ability to support rapid responses that saved lives and allowed it to address immediate needs on the ground. She urged Member States' flexibility on funding and requested that Board members raise awareness of the unique value of the United Nations system in responding to COVID-19. She drew attention to the revised UNFPA global COVID-19 response plan, which was aligned with the humanitarian, health and socioeconomic pillars of the United Nations system response. As of June 2020, 85 per cent of core contributions projected for 2020 had been recorded. She appealed to all

Member States to prioritize early payment of core for 2021. During the Decade of Action, more than 1,250 stakeholder commitments had come out of Nairobi.

55. A group of delegations welcomed the move to enhance collaboration among United Nations organizations and national partners. Noting that the framework for the operationalization and evaluation of the common chapter was a work in progress, they recognized that undertaking an early evaluation of the common chapter might have been premature. They stressed that the common chapter provided an outline for UNFPA to take an integrated approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which was critical to the success of United Nations reform. They underscored that the operationalization of the common chapter was a priority and had to be considered within the broader context of the United Nations development system. They supported ongoing United Nations efforts to formulate how the sum of its individual parts added up to comprehensive system support to Member States and sought clarity on where synergies lay and how they were being leveraged for a coordinated, efficient country team and resident coordinator response.

56. A second group of delegations welcomed the Fund's quick adaptation and response to the COVID-19 crisis, underscoring the importance of adequate, predictable core funding to ensure operational continuity and effectiveness. They welcomed the strong results reported in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, expressed appreciation for the increased focus on climate change, and looked forward to the forthcoming climate change strategy. They were pleased that UNFPA was making innovation a core programme strategy and taking a more outward-looking approach to innovation; they stressed the importance of close collaboration and alignment with the United Nations system-wide innovation agenda. They called on UNFPA to find a balance between its key functions and the need to respond to emerging challenges, and they encouraged the Fund to maintain focus on its core mandate. They recognized UNFPA initiatives in sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response during the pandemic, notably in humanitarian settings, and in guaranteeing access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services in fragile contexts. They encouraged further inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in all UNFPA activities, and highlighted implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the Inter-agency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. They welcomed the Fund's youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education, which contributed to adolescent girls' school attendance and active participation in society, both vital for realization of their rights.

57. A third group of delegations welcomed United Nations system coordination efforts throughout the COVID-19 crisis, as well as UNFPA continuous provision of essential services and its advances in addressing the concerns of women, elderly, children and people with disabilities. They urged UNFPA to continue to implement critical programmes in SIDS, including the Caribbean subregion, particularly programmes that addressed gender-based violence, substance abuse, high levels of unemployment, sexual education and other vital needs, including post and prenatal care. They appealed to UNFPA to allocate additional core resources to SIDS regional and country offices, an appeal they extended to donor countries. They called for regional hubs to be established in locations where life-saving and essential products and services were no longer available.

58. A fourth group of delegations, referring to the report of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS) on UNFPA internal audit and investigation activities in 2019 ([DP/FPA/2020/6](#)) – the Board had decided to postpone formal discussions on the report until the second regular session 2020 – welcomed the continued OAIS focus on governance effectiveness, internal controls, and investigations into allegations of

wrongdoing. They underscored that OAIS should continue to enjoy organizational independence and operate free from interference in determining and performing the full scope of its work and in reporting results to the Board, in accordance with decisions 2015/2 and 2015/13. They noted that in 2019 there were 112 new investigation cases, similar to 2018, and that the caseload had exceeded the regular staffing capacity of OAIS and could not have been absorbed by engaging investigation consultants. They expected UNFPA to remedy the recurrent capacity shortage to avoid exposure to operational and other forms of organizational risks, especially since fraud, financial irregularity, workplace harassment and abuse of authority constituted a majority of cases.

59. In individual statements, delegations underscored countries' need for timely access to fair, transparent, essential medical supplies, new diagnostics and medication. They expressed appreciation for UNFPA work in middle income countries and highlighted the need for increased support in the wake of national emergencies, including natural disasters. They sought clarity on how long-term increases in emergency response plans would affect UNFPA operations overall. They emphasized the need to end gender-based violence and harmful practices to achieve the 2030 Agenda and urged UNFPA continue to provide updates on the implementation of commitments made at the Nairobi Summit. There was a request for clarification on what UNFPA was doing to establish safe spaces for women survivors of gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. They urged UNFPA to continue its focus on international goals while respecting national leadership and ownership. Delegations underscored that upholding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights was an essential part of realizing human rights. They supported UNFPA efforts to secure the supply of contraceptives where needed most in fighting harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and gender-based violence and in abolishing child marriage. They supported UNFPA humanitarian action and encouraged it to continue strengthening its humanitarian programming and investments. They recognized the Fund's role in supporting national and regional Spotlight Initiative programmes. They requested clarity on how UNFPA planned to bridge funding gaps.

60. In response, the Executive Director reiterated that UNFPA prioritized its work with partners to provide timely access to family planning services in locations where women needed it most. She reiterated UNFPA work in concert with country teams and local partners to bridge broken supply and logistic chains and improve timely access to sexual and reproductive health services. UNFPA staff enhanced country support through South-South and cross-regional cooperation, and with the resident and humanitarian coordinators; delegations encouraged UNFPA country representatives to establish new partnerships that enabled stakeholders to build back better. Measures UNFPA had put in place prior to COVID-19 had helped it move swiftly for young people. One of the biggest UNFPA priorities was expanding access for all people with the aim of leaving no one behind. UNFPA worked closely with Governments to actively protect the girl child, including by ending of female genital mutilation. UNFPA had swiftly published several technical guidance notes and briefs on gender-based violence, youth, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, national censuses, and safe spaces, for use at country level. In response to the pandemic's intensification of inequities, including in the area of supplies, UNFPA was able to lean on pre-existing relationships to deliver the maternal health, medication and personal protective equipment that women health-care workers needed.

61. Making investments in data systems to better monitor and assess results and achievements helped countries identify and reach furthest behind populations so targeted policies and programmes could be implemented. She stressed the need for

additional investments in data and monitoring that respected human rights and privacy and outlined how data helped secure commitments for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and accelerated unfinished business under the ICPD programme of action. She highlighted that the alignment of programmes with country priorities happened in concert with in-country partners in the spirit of United Nations reform. The payoff had resulted in greater agility to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reaffirming the importance of rapidly costing responses when asking for assistance, she stated that UNFPA depended on pre-existing partnerships, consultants, clear strategies, workplans and budgets able to effect change in the immediate and long term. UNFPA had increased funding to independent oversight functions and fully respected the independence of OASIS and the need to assure that principle held. UNFPA strongly maintained a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual or other type of wrongdoing, along with commitments to fair due process.

62. The Deputy Executive Director ad interim (Programme) said UNFPA was moving forward within the context of the midterm review to step up its climate response. UNFPA had established working groups and task forces to explore strategies and develop ways in which to move forward as an organization and with external partners. UNFPA was drafting emergency responses to the COVID-19 crisis that were informed by partnerships that predated the pandemic. UNFPA was therefore expanding those responses across through the Spotlight Initiative and with other partners to explore existing initiatives, in gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and maternal health, through a COVID-19 lens.

63. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim (Management), noted the ways in which UNFPA was working within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group framework and how UNFPA support for the implementation of the Goals through the three transformative results was guided by the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. He stressed the importance of data collection and analysis and drew attention to the several ways in which UNFPA was collecting and disaggregating data in and across its programmes.

64. The Director, Technical Division, explained that UNFPA had been monitoring the impact of census data on successful operations, but noted that there were several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean where the process had been postponed. Regarding flexible programming for child marriage and female genital mutilation, and in response to modifications to Spotlight Initiative efforts in countries, he outlined that revised activities were being informed by ‘big data’ to yield sustainable results. That had resulted in greater investments in the Spotlight Initiative, which benefitted collaborating organizations working on programmes to mitigate the adverse impact of COVID-19 on young girls and women, particularly in Africa.

65. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/6 on the midterm review and progress report on the implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018–2021: Report of the Executive Director.

66. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/7 on the midterm review of the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021.

XV. UNFPA country programmes and related matters

67. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, ad interim (Programme), provided an overview of the two country programmes presented for Board approval, followed by the acting UNFPA Regional Director, East and Southern Africa, who presented the country programmes for Ethiopia and South Africa for 2020–2025.

68. The Executive Board reviewed and approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programmes documents for Ethiopia ([DP/FPA/CPD/ETH/9](#)) and South Africa ([DP/FPA/CPD/ZAF/5](#)).

XVI. Evaluation

69. The Executive Board discussion of the UNFPA item on evaluation was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic rescheduled to take place at the second regular session in September 2020.

UNOPS segment

XVII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report

70. In her opening address, the Executive Director, UNOPS, said UNOPS had become more robust and strategically focused, with solid growth and successful management of its assets, focused on delivering value for partners, as reflected in her annual report ([DP/OPS/2020/4](#)) and the review of the UNOPS operational reserve ([DP/OPS/2020/CRP.1](#)). UNOPS had experienced a yearly increase in demand for services; in 2019, it recorded total delivery of \$2.3 billion. Despite challenges in fragile, conflict settings, UNOPS had been able to operate within a remarkably low margin of 1 per cent annually and put risk management at the centre of its work. As annual delivery rose, fees continued to fall. With improved effectiveness and cost-efficiency, UNOPS was delivering more for less. As a project-based organization, UNOPS sought to manage operations well and respond effectively when and where needed, even more so in a post-COVID-19 environment. In 2019, UNOPS registered a ratio of 20 per cent of net assets to revenue and undertook a desk review of net assets and reserves of United Nations organizations. Though it had not received core funding or assessed contributions, UNOPS figures were substantially lower those of other United Nations organizations.

71. The COVID-19 crisis had placed renewed emphasis on prevention and resilience, especially in health care. In 2019, UNOPS had established solid, strategic partnerships in the health-related areas of infrastructure and procurement, including setting up solar power energy systems in health centres and stocking medicines in hospitals and health centres through transparent, efficient procurement processes, helping to improve health services for the most underserved and vulnerable. UNOPS managed the Access to Health Fund, worth some \$215 million in contributions. UNOPS rapid response to COVID-19 had, among other interventions, included ensuring hospitals had intensive care unit equipment, delivering crucial medical supplies, raising awareness, and ensuring prisoners' access to health services. UNOPS had refocused to mitigate the pandemic's negative socioeconomic impact, helping governments provide support to the most vulnerable through rapid cash transfers, rehabilitating rural roads to connect vulnerable communities with essential services, and empowering women. Looking ahead, UNOPS would focus on inequalities that had rendered communities vulnerable, helping to implement programmes that enhanced communities' resilience. As countries moved to recover, UNOPS would prioritize strengthening infrastructure and re-establishing supply chains to make them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient. Approximately 80 per cent of new UNOPS engagements in 2020 addressed long-term socioeconomic recovery. UNOPS was committed to implementing its Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) initiative and would continue to create sustainable infrastructure ecosystems to achieve global and national development goals.

72. A group of delegations welcomed UNOPS performance in implementing the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and continued progress in initiating social impact investment activities. They welcomed the results and reporting that showed how UNOPS had delivered on its mandate as a service provider for the United Nations system, complied with internal quality assurance procedures, and handled relations with external partners. They reiterated their request that future reports address setbacks and risks, including how UNOPS handled them, especially important given its operations in high-risk settings. They recognized UNOPS contributions to United Nations work on peace, security and development and welcomed its ability to respond to new global situations based on its solid financial position, presence, competence and capacities. They acknowledged UNOPS systems for cross-cutting sustainability elements, such as human rights, gender equality, environment and anti-corruption, and commended its sustainability reporting in line with the Global Reporting Initiative, leadership in innovation and technical support, and commitment to climate neutrality. They welcomed UNOPS improvements in gender parity among personnel and encouraged it to continue to achieve gender parity targets set 2019. They welcomed UNOPS achievements in delivering more for less and in net assets, but expressed concern that the threshold for the minimum reserve was potentially low compared to operational risk; they welcomed the proposal to review the level of the minimum operational reserve, while noting that recent growth and increased risk levels might demand a higher minimum reserve threshold. They recognized UNOPS commitment to United Nations reform and called on UNOPS to apply the coordination levy to projects receiving tightly earmarked contributions. They asked UNOPS to transparently provide further information on its definitions and detailed guidance for when and how it applied the coordination levy, including barriers experienced. And they encouraged all United Nations organizations to engage in supporting the system in administrating levies.

73. A second group sought details on how countries welcomed the lower costs for services and encouraged UNOPS to ensure smaller countries could benefit from its services in the absence of large-scale projects, including through the S3I initiative. They welcomed the UNOPS initiative to engage with SIDS on affordable housing. In that regard, they recognized that UNOPS innovation played an important role in developing such projects, thanks to UNOPS prudent financial management. They supported UNOPS approach to ensure healthy growth in its net assets and liabilities and to use a portion of that money to encourage new development projects in developing countries. They expected that continued UNOPS growth in its net assets would allow it to secure more funding and engage more closely with the private sector.

74. In other comments, delegations drew attention to UNOPS important work in the areas of sustainable infrastructure, sustainable procurement and supply chain management through efficient, effective and transparent processes. They called on UNOPS to continue its work under rigorous oversight mechanisms. They commended UNOPS for using its expertise to address COVID-19-related areas, especially regarding health care systems, procurement of medical supplies, and water and sanitation. Delegations highlighted UNOPS work in building resilience to climate change and to reduce climate-related disaster risk and welcomed its work in conflict-affected countries to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. There was a request for clarification on how UNOPS would connect innovative entrepreneurial issues to development needs at the national and community level.

75. In response, the Executive Director reiterated that the newly established senior leadership team allowed for stronger strategic focus and ensured growth along with quality, flexible delivery around the world. UNOPS remained a trusted partnership that pursued open, transparent dialogue with partners to find the right solutions. Its

strong financial situation and net assets management had allowed UNOPS to ensure a rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic and address the socioeconomic recovery, underpinned by a prevention approach. With transparency as a guiding principle, UNOPS had set up a client board in 2020 to push the organization to continuously perform better through open dialogue with partners, the outcome of which would be reflected in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. Overall, UNOPS had been working to broaden its partnerships and funding base, especially urgent in light of COVID-19. And it was actively pursuing gender parity among staff, including when recruiting senior leadership globally. UNOPS was ready to share best practices in support of United Nations reform, including through the principle of mutual recognition, as part of system-wide efforts to work together more efficiently and effectively.

76. The Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration said UNOPS was monitoring its progress on gender parity closely. It had reached just over 44.3 per cent of gender parity and was therefore in line with its targets, with the aim of achieving 47 per cent by December 2020. Though COVID-19 had caused a slowdown in recruitment in early 2020, delaying progress, UNOPS was confident it would achieve its target once the pandemic subsided. UNOPS had in place several initiatives to address that issue and was working closely with country offices to ensure field-focused outreach.

77. The Director, Regional Portfolios, said that in its COVID-19 response UNOPS was active in all regions, supporting countries and communities, especially those hit hardest, with a focus on long-term socioeconomic recovery. UNOPS was active in over 70 countries across the globe and had secured some \$270 million for COVID-19-related assistance, with a pipeline of some \$650 million, 50 per cent of which was in procurement for laboratory equipment, testing kits, and medical supplies. UNOPS was delivering a variety of human resources services and rehabilitating hospital and health centre infrastructure. In those efforts, gender mainstreaming in programmes and gender parity among staff remained, along with health and safety, key guiding principles.

78. The Chief Executive, UNOPS Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments initiative, reaffirmed UNOPS commitment to assisting SIDS through programmes based on portfolios rather than individual investments, in the areas of affordable housing, renewable energy and health infrastructure. UNOPS had set up S3I initiative hubs in three locations, including in Japan, and was quickly expanding several others in different countries. The hubs served to capitalize on the expertise of institutions and entrepreneurs in hub-based countries to address development challenges in programme countries, using successful best practices, based on which country-tailored technical solutions were in turn applied to programme country challenges.

79. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/8 on the annual report of the UNOPS Executive Director.

Part three
Second regular session 2020

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 31 August to 4 September 2020**

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 75th 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 75th 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 75th 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 evaluable. 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 Kosovo¹ ([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 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

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

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 the 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 of 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 prepositioning 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/CHN/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 Kosovo² (DP/FPA/CPD/SRB/2/Add.1), Timor-Leste (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

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

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 25th 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.

Annex I

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2020/1

Reports of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2018

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the unqualified audit opinions that UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNOPS received for 2018, while also noting that there is still room for improvement;
2. *Calls for* a strong focus on measures targeted towards preventative actions and quality assurance, as well as ethics awareness-raising, and protection of whistle-blowers, in line with existing non-retaliatory policies of the entities;
3. *Urges* UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNOPS to continue implementing and closing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2018, and the remaining recommendations from prior years;
4. *Calls for* UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNOPS management to systematically continue to improve the maturity of risk management at all levels, particularly strengthening accountability and the implementation of the internal control frameworks;

With regard to UNDP:

5. *Notes* the progress made by UNDP in addressing the refined top seven audit-related priorities in 2018–2019;
6. *Recalls* decision 2019/2 and notes that important findings and recommendations of the Board of Auditors in 2018 remain applicable to the country level, and encourages UNDP to present its action plan of the 2019 internal study on root causes underlying recurring audit observations and present concrete plans to address these oversight and accountability issues across the UNDP country, regional and global management practices and portfolios;
7. *Notes* that the Board of Auditors observed different levels of maturity and awareness among the bureaux and country offices in their compliance to internal control frameworks, and encourages UNDP to take appropriate action to ensure that all staff at country level are sufficiently trained and have adequate competence for continuous stringent compliance with its accountability and internal control frameworks;
8. *Also notes* the observations by the Board of Auditors relating to human resources, and encourages UNDP to further ensure compliance with policies on workforce and personnel management across the organization;
9. *Looks forward* to the review of the UNDP enterprise risk management policy in the 2020 report of the Board of Auditors;

With regard to UNFPA:

10. *Takes note* of the report (DP/FPA/2020/1) on the actions taken by UNFPA and the further measures planned by the organization to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2018;
11. *Looks forward* to the UNFPA enterprise risk management policy in 2020 and the enterprise resource planning system in 2021 to support the implementation and closing of outstanding recommendations;

With regard to UNOPS:

12. *Notes* that the Board of Auditors recommended that UNOPS needed to formulate a strategy for the effective utilization of its increasing surpluses under its operational

reserve and, recalling decisions 2012/5 and 2019/20 in this regard, calls on UNOPS to utilize its operational reserve in strict accordance with the existing financial rules and regulations.

6 February 2020

2020/2

Working methods of the Executive Board

The Executive Board

1. *Recalls* decision 2019/16 of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS on working methods of the Executive Board and reiterates its requests therein;
2. *Takes note* of the joint paper on working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP;
3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the revised guidelines for the field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women, and for the joint field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP;
4. *Requests* the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UN-Women, to submit to Member States, ahead of the annual session 2020, with a view to conclude discussions on the working methods no later than the second regular session, a concrete proposal for a rearranged annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2021, which includes daily schedules of the three sessions and informal consultations, supported by a detailed comparative analysis of potential implications on items for decisions, overall costs, efficiency and oversight, with a view to reducing the workload of the second regular session by shifting agenda items among formal sessions, as appropriate;
5. *Further recalls* decision 2018/22 and stresses the need to continue to harmonize the consideration of common agenda items across the respective Executive Board agendas and requests the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UN-Women, to reflect it in the proposal of a rearranged workplan for 2021;
6. *Recalls* decision 2018/22 and requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS management to circulate timely written response to the unanswered questions raised at formal sessions of the Executive Board;
7. *Takes note with appreciation* of the current tracking system of the decisions of the Executive Board and requests the secretariat to put the full text of decisions into the system so that Member States have full oversight on follow-up and fulfilment of decisions, starting in 2019.

6 February 2020

2020/3

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session 2020

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its first regular session 2020, it:

Item 1
Organizational matters

Elected on 16 December 2019 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 Eneström (Sweden)
 Vice-President: H.E. Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, (Rwanda)
 Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Mansour Ayyad Alotaibi (Kuwait)

Adopted the agenda and approved the workplan for its first regular session 2020 (DP/2020/L.1);

Approved the report of the second regular session 2019 (DP/2020/1);

Adopted the annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2020 (DP/2020/CRP.1);

Approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2020;

Agreed to the following schedule for the remaining sessions of the Executive Board in 2020:

Annual session: 1 to 5 June 2020 (New York)

Second regular session: 31 August to 4 September 2020

Joint segment

Item 2
Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

Adopted decision 2020/1 on the recommendations of the Board of Auditors – reports of UNDP (DP/2020/3), UNCDF (DP/2020/4), UNFPA (DP/FPA/2020/1) and UNOPS (DP/OPS/2020/1) on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2018;

Item 3
Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Took note of the joint preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/CRP.1);

Item 4
Working methods of the Executive Board

Adopted decision 2020/2 on the working methods of the Executive Board.

UNDP segment

Item 5
UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNDP country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Africa: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DP/DCP/COD/3); Mali (DP/DCP/MLI/4);

Arab States: Iraq (DP/DCP/IRQ/3); Kuwait (DP/DCP/KWT/3);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Cuba (DP/DCP/CUB/3); Paraguay (DP/DCP/PRY/3);

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan, Colombia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Venezuela (DP/2020/5 and DP/2020/5/Add.1)

Approved the second extension of the country programme for Mexico and the third extensions for the country programmes for South Africa and the Syrian Arab Republic (DP/2020/5);

UNFPA segment

Item 6 Evaluation

Took note of the developmental evaluation of results-based management at UNFPA (DP/FPA/2020/CRP.1);

Item 7 Country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNFPA country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

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);

Took note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela, and approved the third, one-year extension for the country programme for Syrian Arab Republic and the third, three-month extension for South Africa (DP/FPA/2020/2);

UNOPS segment

Item 8 United Nations Office for Project Services

Heard the UNOPS Executive Director give a statement.

6 February 2020

2020/4

Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2019

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the evidence and data-informed midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator 2019 (DP/2020/8) and its annexes;
2. *Takes note* of the results achieved at mid-point, and *requests* that UNDP accelerate efforts, while recognizing that the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, during its second half is unknown;
3. *Requests* that UNDP take into account the lessons learned from the first two years of implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, as well as from its previous strategic plans;
4. *Welcomes* progress made towards the outcome areas of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and, in this regard, *encourages* UNDP to further its efforts to advance poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions, accelerate structural

transformations for sustainable development, and strengthen resilience to shocks and crises;

5. *Welcomes* the strong UNDP commitment to United Nations development system reform and *encourages* UNDP to continue to work closely with United Nations organizations, under the leadership of resident coordinators and in collaboration with United Nations country teams, stakeholders and other development partners, to support country efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework;

6. *Notes with appreciation* the annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the gender equality strategy 2019 (DP/2020/11), the contribution of UNDP towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the strong UNDP progress against the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 2.0 and the United Nations country team SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, and *encourages* UNDP to continue to implement its gender equality strategy, 2018–2021, support gender mainstreaming efforts, and shift towards more transformative interventions;

7. *Notes* UNDP work on climate change, and *requests* that UNDP report to the Executive Board, in the annual report of the Administrator, on its operational and programming targets, corresponding efforts, and results related to low emissions and climate-resilient development, as outlined in the integrated results and resources framework of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including by reducing its own carbon footprint and through its social and environmental standards, as well as on the monitoring, evaluation and management oversight of climate-related projects, including those funded by vertical funds;

8. *Notes* that UNDP needs to scale up implementation of its Funding Compact commitments, many of which are set for 2021, and *requests* that UNDP continue the practice of providing a written update and informal briefing in the context of the structured funding dialogues, prior to the second regular session 2020, on how the outcomes of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 relate to the effective implementation of the funding compact in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

9. *Welcomes* UNDP progress towards achieving the outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and *encourages* UNDP to further accelerate progress on the agreed commitments and mandates under United Nations development system reform, including the funding compact and General Assembly resolutions on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

10. *Requests* that UNDP accelerate its efforts to implement the common chapter, together with UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, including by developing the necessary tracking framework within the respective integrated results and resources frameworks of their current strategic plans, following the recommendations of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020 and in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as laid out in General Assembly resolution 72/279, and *also requests* that UNDP present a joint update on progress to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2020;

11. *Urges* UNDP to improve progress towards achieving the partially met outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and *ensure* that the organization reflects new methods of achieving these outputs in the next strategic plan, 2022–2025;

12. *Calls for* UNDP to adopt more ambitious milestones for the outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, that have consistently been over-achieved in order to ensure the targets set remain both realistic and more ambitious;
13. *Welcomes* the UNDP commitment to help programme countries respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and *also welcomes* the UNDP technical lead on the socioeconomic response and recovery efforts under the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19, under the leadership of the resident coordinators and working in collaboration with stakeholders and other development partners;
14. *Notes* the UNDP response to COVID-19 in line with United Nations system-wide efforts and *requests* that UNDP provide an update on its work and on the impact of the pandemic on operations and programmatic activities, beginning from the second regular session 2020;
15. *Calls for* UNDP to ensure delivery of the objectives of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, and to continue to work as part of a coordinated international response, with a focus on supporting programme countries to build back better, leaving no one behind;
16. *Requests* that UNDP continue to sharpen its programme focus in its mandated core competency areas in the implementation of the remainder of the current Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and in the preparation for the next strategic plan, 2022–2025;
17. *Approves* the course of action and the lessons learned proposed in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and *requests* that UNDP start preparations early for the next strategic plan, 2022–2025, in full consultation with the Executive Board, taking into account the lessons learned from the midterm review, the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020, and the outcome of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review for development of the United Nations system, and *also requests* that UNDP present a roadmap at the second regular session 2020 for consultations planned in the preparation of the next strategic plan, 2022–2025.

5 June 2020

2020/5

Midterm review of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the midterm review of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018–2021 ([DP/2020/9](#));
2. *Welcomes* the report dated 29 May 2020 of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the midterm review of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018–2021, and requests that UNDP implement and report on all recommendations of the Advisory Committee, in line with existing reporting mechanisms;
3. *Welcomes* the strong UNDP performance in mobilizing resources, balancing the institutional budget and achieving efficiency, against the backdrop of the substantial challenges and changes the organization faced during 2018–2019, while encouraging UNDP to continue to intensify its dialogue with all Member States to broaden the contributor base and increase regular resources, in line with the funding compact of the Secretary-General, including by overcoming remaining legal and other obstacles for improving its cooperation with the private sector, while taking into account lessons learned from existing partnerships, including with the international financial

institutions and other United Nations organizations, to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication;

4. *Notes* the imbalances across programmatic areas in terms of available resources and expenditure in relation to targets, including underperforming targets, and requests that UNDP strive for adequate and equitable division of resources for all outcome areas and signature solutions of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, while noting the importance of sufficient, predictable and flexible regular resources, which is critical for UNDP;
5. *Requests* that UNDP include information on imbalances across programmatic and outcome areas and signature solutions as part of existing reporting ahead of the structured funding dialogues at the second regular session 2020 of the Executive Board;
6. *Recognizes* continued UNDP efforts to garner management efficiencies, while further optimizing programme effectiveness both in terms of substance and form;
7. *Welcomes* that, for every United States dollar of expenditure during 2018–2019, 91 cents were spent on development programmes and services, up from 88 cents in 2014–2017, and *notes* that, in aggregate, this represented approximately \$240 million in additional resources available for development in 2018–2019;
8. *Acknowledges* the reduction in the regular resources institutional budget expenditure, which allowed the proportion of regular resources allocated to development programmes to increase by \$19.5 million;
9. *Endorses* the current UNDP course to complete the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period and lay the groundwork for the next strategic plan period, 2022–2025;
10. *Encourages* UNDP to accelerate progress on the agreed commitments and mandates under United Nations development system reform, including the funding compact of the Secretary-General and the resolutions of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

5 June 2020

2020/6

Integrated midterm review and progress report on implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018–2021: Report of the Executive Director

The Executive Board

1. *Notes with appreciation* the progress made by UNFPA in achieving the cumulative results of its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and encourages UNFPA to further integrate the United Nations development system reform mandates in the remaining implementation of this Strategic Plan;
2. *Welcomes* the UNFPA progress towards achieving the Strategic Plan outputs;
3. *Urges* UNFPA to improve progress towards achieving partially achieved Strategic Plan outputs and ensure that the fund reflects new methods of achieving these outputs in the next strategic plan;
4. *Calls for* UNFPA to adopt more ambitious milestones for the outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which have consistently been overachieved, in order to ensure the targets set remain both realistic and ambitious;
5. *Notes* the commitment of UNFPA to strengthening its thematic focus on climate change, and requests UNFPA to report to the Executive Board, in the annual report of the Executive Director, on its programming and operational targets, corresponding

efforts and results, and through applicable environmental and social standards, to make its programmes and operations consistent with its thematic focus on climate change, as outlined in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

6. *Requests* that UNFPA accelerate its efforts to implement the common chapter, together with UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women, including by developing the necessary tracking framework within the respective integrated results and resources frameworks of their current strategic plans, following the recommendations of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020 and in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, and to present a joint update on the progress to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2020;

7. *Welcomes* the strong UNFPA commitment to United Nations development system reform, and encourages UNFPA to continue to work closely with United Nations organizations, under the leadership of resident coordinators and in collaboration with the United Nations country team, stakeholders and other development partners, to support country efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework;

8. *Welcomes* ongoing UNFPA implementation of its funding compact commitments, many of which are set for 2021, and encourages UNFPA to retain the high level of ambition of its funding compact commitments, and requests that UNFPA continue the practice of providing a written update and informal briefing in the context of the structured funding dialogue, prior to the second regular session 2020, on how the outcomes of the midterm review relate to the effective implementation of the funding compact in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

9. *Takes note* of the report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2019 (DP/FPA/2020/4, Part II) and a slowdown in terms of addressing them, and calls on UNFPA to accelerate efforts towards their implementation, where applicable;

10. *Approves* the proposed adjustments to the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, based on the findings of the midterm review, which shall be implemented in accordance with Executive Board decision 2017/23;

11. *Notes with appreciation* the UNFPA response to COVID-19, in line with United Nations system efforts, and requests UNFPA to provide an update on the impact of the pandemic on operations beginning at the second regular session in September 2020;

12. *Calls for* UNFPA to ensure delivery of the objectives of the strategic plan, 2018–2021, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, and to continue to work as part of a coordinated international response, with a focus on supporting programme countries to build back better, leaving no one behind.

5 June 2020

2020/7

Midterm review of the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the midterm review of the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021 (DP/FPA/2020/5), aligned with the midterm review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (DP/FPA/2020/4, (Part I));

2. *Takes note* of the results framework and resource requirements reflected in the revised estimates for the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021, including linkages of results and resources, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2020/5](#);
3. *Welcomes* the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the midterm review of the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021, and requests UNFPA to implement and report on all recommendations of the Advisory Committee, in line with existing reporting mechanisms;
4. *Calls on* UNFPA to continue and accelerate efforts to realize efficiency gains arising from United Nations development system reform initiatives in the remainder of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, in line with the General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, and to redeploy these efficiency gains for development activities, including coordination;
5. *Encourages* UNFPA to continue to intensify its dialogue with all Member States to broaden the contributor base and encourage support to regular resources, in line with the funding compact of the Secretary-General;
6. *Approves* the presentation of activities and associated costs reflected in document [DP/FPA/2020/5](#);
7. *Approves* revised gross estimates for the institutional budget, 2018–2021, in the amount of \$738.6 million, noting that these estimates include \$169.2 million for indirect cost recovery from other resources;
8. *Approves* a revised ceiling for global and regional interventions 2018–2021, in the amount of \$162.7 million of the projected regular resources, noting that this amount cannot be exceeded without approval of the Executive Board;
9. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2015/3, approves a revised amount of \$29.5 million of regular resources for the UNFPA emergency fund, and reaffirms the existing authorization for the UNFPA Executive Director to increase the emergency fund by up to \$2 million beyond the ceiling in a given year if the number and extent of the emergencies so warrant.

5 June 2020

2020/8

Annual report of the UNOPS Executive Director

The Executive Board

With regard to the annual report of the Executive Director ([DP/OPS/2020/4](#)):

1. *Recognizes* the contributions of UNOPS in 2019 to the operational results of governments, the United Nations and other partners through efficient management support services and effective specialized technical expertise, expanding the implementation capacity for sustainable development;
2. *Welcomes* the progress made in implementing the UNOPS strategic plan, 2018–2021;
3. *Takes note* of the annual report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and the progress made in implementing recommendations relevant to UNOPS;
4. *Welcomes* the significant progress achieved with sustainable infrastructure impact investment activities in UNOPS mandated areas, including the establishment of the Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments Office;
5. *Recalls* decision 2019/15, paragraph 8, on the implementation of the 1 per cent levy and decides to stay seized of the matter;

With regard to the conference room paper on the UNOPS net assets (DP/OPS/2020/CRP.1)

6. *Takes note* of the conference room paper on UNOPS net assets (DP/OPS/2020/CRP.1);
7. Recalling decisions 2012/5, 2019/20 and 2020/1, *invites* UNOPS to continue to manage its net assets in a flexible manner, maintaining robust risk management and transparent reporting, in accordance with the existing financial rules and regulations;
8. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Growth and Innovation Reserve, and calls on UNOPS to continue providing annual updates to the Board on its utilization;
9. *Requests* that UNOPS conduct a detailed study of its operational reserve and the formula for calculating the mandatory minimum reserve level;
10. *Requests* that UNOPS, pursuant to review by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, provide an oral update at the annual session 2021 and submit the outcome for consideration by the Executive Board at the earliest opportunity and no later than the first regular session 2022, with the ambition to present it at the second regular session 2021.

5 June 2020

2020/9

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session 2020

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its annual session 2020, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda and approved the workplan for the annual session 2020 (DP/2020/L.2, as orally amended);

Approved the report of the first regular session 2020 (DP/2020/6);

Joint segment

Item 2

Joint update on the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS response to COVID-19 crisis in the context of the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

Took note of the joint update on the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS response to COVID-19 crisis in the context of the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;

UNDP segment

Item 5

Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2019

Adopted decision 2020/4 on the midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2019;

Item 6
Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2020/5 on the midterm review of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018–2021;

Item 7
Gender equality at UNDP

Took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2018–2021 ([DP/2020/11](#));

Item 8
Human Development Report

Took note of an update by the secretariat on consultations on the Human Development Report;

Item 9
UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNDP country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Africa: Ethiopia ([DP/DCP/ETH/4](#)); South Africa ([DP/DCP/ZAF/3](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Algeria, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as approved by the Administrator, and presented in document [DP/2020/12](#);

UNFPA segment

Item 13
Annual report of the Executive Director

Adopted decision 2020/6 on the integrated midterm review and progress report on implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018–2021: Report of the Executive Director;

Item 14
Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2020/7 on the midterm review of the UNFPA integrated budget, 2018–2021;

Item 16
Country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNFPA country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

East and Southern Africa: Ethiopia ([DP/FPA/CPD/ETH/9](#)); and South Africa ([DP/FPA/CPD/ZAF/5](#));

UNOPS segment

Item 17
United Nations Office for Project Services

Adopted decision 2020/8 on the annual report of the UNOPS Executive Director.

5 June 2020

2020/10

Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigations and management responses

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the progress of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS in addressing audit-related management issues in 2019;
2. *Notes with appreciation* efforts to implement outstanding audit recommendations from previous reports;
3. *Encourages* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to work with UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP and agree on harmonized definitions and reporting for audit and investigation matters, where applicable, to provide the Executive Boards with a more coherent overview of findings and results;

With regard to UNDP:

4. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Office of Audit and Investigations on internal audit and investigation activities in 2019 (DP/2020/16) and its annexes, and the management response thereto;
5. *Expresses* continuing support for the internal audit and investigation functions of UNDP;
6. *Notes* the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects under some phase of the Office of Audit and Investigations /Social and Environmental Compliance Unit-managed grievance process and the audits and investigations performed by the Office on the UNDP-GEF portfolio, requests an update from the Office on the status of audit and investigation work and of the grievances reviewed by the Unit, and further requests the Office and UNDP management to present comprehensive reporting on UNDP-GEF-funded projects to the Executive Board during annual reporting on the Office of Audit and Investigations, starting in 2021, and at targeted informal briefings, as needed;
7. *Urges* UNDP to enhance audit and investigation capabilities to oversee GEF-funded projects while preserving audit and investigation capabilities in other areas;
8. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee;

With regard to UNFPA:

9. *Takes note* of the present report (DP/FPA/2020/6), the opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the UNFPA framework of governance, risk management and control (DP/FPA/2020/6/Add.1), the annual report of the Oversight Advisory Committee (DP/FPA/2020/6/Add.2), and the management response thereto and to the present report;
10. *Notes with concern* the rising number of investigation cases carried over from past years, welcomes that human resources have been strengthened and encourages UNFPA to effectively deploy these resources to reduce the existing caseload;
11. *Expresses* its continuing support for the strengthening of the audit and investigation functions at UNFPA, and for the provision of sufficient resources to discharge their mandate;
12. *Acknowledges* and supports the engagement of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services in joint audit and investigation activities;

With regard to UNOPS:

13. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Internal Audit and Investigations Group for 2019 and the management response thereto;
14. *Takes note* of the significant progress made in implementation of audit recommendations;
15. *Takes note* of the opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control;
16. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Audit Advisory Committee for 2019.

4 September 2020

2020/11

Reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS ([DP/2020/17](#), [DP/FPA/2020/7](#) and [DP/OPS/2020/3](#));
2. *Notes* the progress made by the UNDP Ethics Office in strengthening the ethical culture of UNDP;
3. *Welcomes* the continued progress in the work of the UNFPA Ethics Office;
4. *Notes* the progress made by the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in strengthening the ethical culture of UNOPS.
5. *Takes note with appreciation* of the updates provided for UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS in the background paper on response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and notes with appreciation increasing inter-agency cooperation;
6. *Notes* progress made and the need for continued effort and focus on preventing and taking immediate action on tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, including ensuring that policies and procedures deliver impact and are resourced sufficiently, and that proposed actions are implemented at country, regional and global levels;
7. *Requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to take action to ensure a victim-centred, system-wide and coherent approach at all levels to prevent and tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, while leveraging their respective mandates, and to address the increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment during the COVID-19 response and recovery;
8. *Requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue providing updates to the Executive Board on how UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS are preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in its policies, procedures and operations at all levels, taking into account recommendations from the independent review.

4 September 2020

2020/12

Joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* the joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy ([DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/1](#)), including cost-classification categories, methodology and rates, effective 1 January 2022;

2. *Requests* UNDP and UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, to adapt the presentation of the national committees' rates in table 4 of the policy, clarifying that in the case of UNICEF, the 5 per cent rate is applicable only to thematic contributions raised by National Committees;
3. *Resolves* that the comprehensive cost-recovery policy as outlined in document [DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/1](#) supersedes the previous cost-recovery policy, including cost-classification categories, methodology and rates;
4. *Decides* that agreements signed prior to 1 January 2022 will be honoured using the existing cost-recovery rates (per Executive Board decision 2013/9) and that new agreements as well as revisions of existing agreements that result in additional/new contributions signed after 1 January 2022, will comply with the rates in the cost-recovery policy as approved in this decision;
5. *Requests* UNDP and UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, to provide harmonized annual reporting on the progress of implementation of the cost-recovery policy as an annex to their respective existing reporting, including the presentation of the financial impact of the harmonized differentiated rates and waivers granted, and to continue including, in line with the policy, inter alia an itemization of each waiver/discount listing the donor name, total contribution, programme name, cost-recovery rate and United States dollar value of the waiver/discount, as well as the resulting effective cost-recovery rates and cost-recovery amounts realized;
6. *Further requests* UNDP and UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, to present in a harmonized way in their existing reporting the calculations of the notional cost-recovery rates in their respective integrated budget documents;
7. *Requests* UNDP and UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, to present a comprehensive review of the cost-recovery policy and its implementation for decision at the second regular session 2024, and further requests UNDP and UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, to organize a joint briefing in 2023 to present a joint timeline for the review and preliminary observations and findings from the implementation of the cost-recovery policy.

4 September 2020

2020/13

Working methods of the Executive Board

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the joint paper with concrete proposals for rearranged annual workplans of the Executive Boards for 2021, prepared by the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);
2. *Approves* the proposed shift in items among formal sessions which seeks to reduce the workload of the second regular session;
3. *Requests* the secretariat to ensure that sufficient time is allotted to each session of the Executive Board and each of their items, as well as to the respective informal consultations to enable the Executive Board to exercise its oversight function.

4 September 2020

2020/14 UNDP structured funding dialogue

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (DP/2020/20) and its annexes;
2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UNDP jointly with UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women to improve the structured funding dialogues;
3. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular (core) resources linked to intended and demonstrated results, which is critical for UNDP to deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and help realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; recalls the importance of broadening the contributor base and encourages UNDP, in line with the funding compact of the Secretary-General, to engage with Member States to consider to prioritize contributing to UNDP regular resources in a timely and predictable manner; and further encourages UNDP to continue to make efforts in terms of visibility and recognition of contributions to regular resources;
4. *Requests* UNDP to update the Board ahead of the annual session 2021 and report at the second regular session 2021, as part of the structured funding dialogue, on how UNDP will mitigate the effects of potential decreases in global official development assistance, including its impact on implementation of the Strategic Plan;
5. *Invites* UNDP, as appropriate, to continue its dialogue with Member States with the aim of reaching the funding targets of the integrated resource plan and integrated budget and on shifting from highly-earmarked to regular and flexible resources and on prioritizing multi-year pledges, to enable UNDP to respond to the evolving needs of programme countries in line with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;
6. *Urges* UNDP to continue to improve the quality of its independent and decentralized evaluation function and to leverage it in support of organizational learning, accountability and transparency to improve programme design and delivery;
7. *Recognizes* the progress made by UNDP on entity-specific commitments of the funding compact and requests UNDP to engage with United Nations development system entities and the United Nations Development Coordination Office in the Office's coordination of a further harmonization of these indicators across the United Nations development system while maintaining their entity-specific relevance;
8. *Notes* the lack of a commonly agreed definition for “joint activities” and requests UNDP to engage with United Nations development system entities and the United Nations Development Coordination Office in the Office's coordination of the formulation of a system-wide definition of joint activity expenditures undertaken by the United Nations development system entities that accurately reflects the cooperation taking place among United Nations development system entities on joint development activities;
9. *Requests* UNDP to continue to support full implementation of the Business Operations Strategy across all United Nations country teams by 2021;
10. *Requests* UNDP to include in future structured funding dialogue reports information on contributions to thematic funding windows and on how the utilization of such funds contributes to the achievement of the results of the strategic plan;
11. *Recognizes* the importance of contributions made by programme country Governments to UNDP for local office costs, both cash and in kind, and encourages UNDP to work with respective Governments with a view to agreeing, where possible,

on annual or multi-year contributions to fulfil such commitments, taking into account national budgetary planning processes.

4 September 2020

2020/15

UNDP evaluation

The Executive Board

With regard to the annual report on evaluation, 2019 (DP/2020/13) and the management commentaries thereto:

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on evaluation and stresses the importance of gender-responsive evaluations to track impactful and transformative outcomes in gender equality and the empowerment of women;
2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the Independent Evaluation Office and the progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function in actively contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts and in fostering national evaluation capacity development;
3. *Looks forward* to future annual evaluation reports with more analysis of accomplishments and challenges in the work of the Independent Evaluation Office, including a synthesis of the results of evaluations;
4. *Requests* UNDP to continue to improve the independence, quality and use of decentralized evaluations throughout the organization, particularly at country level, and to allocate sufficient resources to the Independent Evaluation Office and the decentralized evaluation function for this purpose, consistent with the expectations set out in the evaluation policy;
5. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Independent Evaluation Office to conduct evaluations in crisis and post-crisis settings during 2018 and 2019, as well as the office's commitment to lesson-learning on how to successfully conduct evaluations in crisis-affected countries;
6. *Requests* UNDP to address the issues raised;
7. *Acknowledges* the conclusions reached by the evaluation offices of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women in their evaluability assessment of the common chapter and requests management, in consultation with the independent evaluation offices, to develop the necessary tracking framework within the respective integrated results and resources frameworks of their current strategic plans, following the recommendations of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter, dated 30 March 2020, in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as laid out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#);

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle-income countries (DP/2020/21) and the management response thereto (DP/2020/22):

8. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle-income countries and the management response thereto;
9. *Welcomes* the evaluation's findings and conclusions regarding the significant contribution by UNDP to development results in middle-income countries, while noting the programmatic areas identified for consolidation and strengthening;
10. *Requests* UNDP, in line with the evaluation's findings, conclusions and recommendations, to consider differentiated approaches in its programmatic engagement in middle-income countries, recognizing their diversity and different development priorities, including ensuring adequate consideration of these findings,

conclusions and recommendations in the preparation and formulation of the next strategic plan 2022–2025 and the allocation of resources in its subsequent implementation;

11. *Notes* the findings, conclusions and recommendations related to the income-based approach to allocation of regular resources among middle-income countries, and requests UNDP management to consider and review options for strengthening the consideration of human development perspectives and financing capacities in the approach to allocation of regular resources to middle-income countries, including the smooth transition of countries graduating from the least developed country category, and to present options for consideration in the context of the development of the integrated resource plan and integrated budget for 2022–2025.

4 September 2020

2020/16

United Nations Volunteers

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the results achieved by the United Nations the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) in 2019 as reflected in the report of the Administrator (DP/2020/14);
2. *Expresses appreciation* to all United Nations Volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during 2019;
3. *Takes note with appreciation* the focused efforts of UNV on gender equality and the empowerment of women and on proactively engaging persons with disabilities in the United Nations system;
4. *Approves* the proposed adjustments to the results framework for the Strategic Framework, as outlined in annex 6;
5. *Reaffirms* the crucial role of the Special Voluntary Fund in delivering the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, and encourages UNV to continue engaging development partners to contribute to the Fund;
6. *Commends* UNV for the results achieved through the organizational transformation and during the first two years of the Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, as highlighted in the midterm review;
7. *Requests* that UNV continue to build on the progress made in pursuing innovative volunteer solutions that enable the United Nations system to accelerate its contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

4 September 2020

2020/17

Midterm review of the United Nations Capital Development Fund Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, including the annual report on results achieved in 2019

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the midterm review of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, including the annual report on results achieved by UNCDF in 2019 (DP/2020/15);
2. *Commends* the progress made by UNCDF in implementing its Strategic Framework, 2018–2021;

3. *Welcomes* its commitment to innovative financing solutions and approaches to make finance work for the poor;
4. *Notes* that the work of UNCDF is critical to supporting the least developed countries through the COVID-19 pandemic;
5. *Recommits* to supporting UNCDF, including through fully funding its resource requirements of \$25 million per year in regular resources, \$75 million per year in other resources and capitalizing its Investment Fund with \$50 million.

4 September 2020

2020/18

UNFPA structured funding dialogue

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue 2019–2020 ([DP/FPA/2020/9](#));
2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UNFPA jointly with UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women to improve the structured funding dialogues;
3. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular (core) resources linked to intended and demonstrated results, which is critical for UNFPA to deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and help realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recalls the importance of broadening the contributor base and encourages UNFPA, in line with the funding compact of the Secretary-General, to engage with Member States to consider to prioritize contributing to UNFPA regular resources in a timely and predictable manner; and further encourages UNFPA to continue to make efforts in terms of visibility and recognition of contributions to regular resources;
4. *Requests* UNFPA to update the Board ahead of the annual session 2021 and report at the second regular session 2021, as part of the structured funding dialogue, on how UNFPA will mitigate the effects of potential decreases in global official development assistance, including its impact on implementation of the strategic plan;
5. *Invites* UNFPA, as appropriate, to continue its dialogue with Member States with the aim of reaching the funding targets of the strategic plan and the integrated budget and on shifting from highly-earmarked to regular and flexible resources and on prioritizing multi-year pledges, to enable UNFPA to respond to the evolving needs of programme countries in line with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;
6. *Recognizes* the progress made by UNFPA on entity-specific commitments of the funding compact and requests UNFPA to engage with United Nations development system entities and the United Nations Development Coordination Office in the Office's coordination of a further harmonization of these indicators across the United Nations development system while maintaining their entity-specific relevance;
7. *Notes* the lack of a commonly agreed definition for 'joint activities' and requests UNFPA to engage with United Nations development system entities and the United Nations Development Coordination Office in the Office's coordination of the formulation of a system-wide definition of joint activity expenditures undertaken by the United Nations development system entities that accurately reflects the cooperation taking place among UNDS entities on joint development activities;
8. *Requests* UNFPA to continue to support full implementation of the Business Operations Strategy across all United Nations country teams by 2021;

9. *Requests* UNFPA to present in future structured funding dialogue reports how the planned and actual allocation of resources to thematic funds contributes to the achievement of the results of the strategic plan.

4 September 2020

2020/19

UNFPA evaluation

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on the evaluation function, of the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2020;
2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UNFPA and the progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function, in actively contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development;
3. *Encourages* UNFPA to strive to progressing towards an allocation of at least 1.4 per cent and up to 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, as embedded in the UNFPA Evaluation Policy of 2019;
4. *Reaffirms* the role played by the evaluation function and underscore the importance of high-quality, independent evaluative evidence in the context of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018–2021, and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to a principled, efficient and timely response to the existing humanitarian needs;
5. *Acknowledges* the conclusions reached by the evaluation offices of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women in their evaluability assessment of the common chapter, and requests management, in consultation with the independent evaluation offices, to develop the necessary tracking framework within the respective integrated results and resources frameworks of their current strategic plans, following the recommendations of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter, dated 30 March 2020;
6. *Welcomes* the management response to the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action and *requests* UNFPA to track and monitor progress of work outlined in the management response against the evaluation's recommendations, and to share this progress with the Executive Board at the annual session 2021, including an update on the impacts of COVID-19 on the implementation of recommendations.

4 September 2020

2020/20

United Nations Office for Project Services

The Executive Board

With regard to the midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (DP/OPS/2020/5):

1. *Takes note* of the midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and its annexes;
2. *Welcomes* UNOPS support to the operational results of the United Nations, Governments and other partners and the intent to sustain its focus and direction;

3. *Underlines* the continued relevance of the UNOPS strategic framework as the basis for driving the ambition to become a better known and recognized resource for the United Nations and Member States;
4. *Recognizes* that the management results achieved reconfirm the relevance of the non-programmatic business-to-business value proposition expressed in its contribution goals, and the ability to safeguard the viability of the unique demand-driven and self-financed business model for the medium and longer term;
5. *Encourages* the continued attention of UNOPS on focusing its efforts based on the evolving operational context and policy guidance and on management oversight needs to ensure accountability, building on its technical expertise and the comparative advantages of its implementation mandate;
6. *Takes note* of the increasing demand for UNOPS to expand implementation capacity for sustainable development, including in direct support of countries and in the most fragile situations, while demand has remained relatively stable from United Nations entities;
7. *Notes* the progress achieved in promoting and enabling countries' sustainable infrastructure impact investment and the potential for additional added value in the areas of quality infrastructure and sustainable public procurement;
8. *Reiterates* its encouragement to UNOPS, inter alia, through the UNOPS client board, to improve its value proposition to United Nations entities in order for them to take advantage of UNOPS efficiency and effectiveness, emphasizing technical expertise in quality infrastructure, sustainable public procurement, and sustainable infrastructure impact investment;

With regard to the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2019 (DP/OPS/2020/6):

9. *Takes note* of the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2019;
10. *Welcomes* the data and analysis contained therein;
11. *Reiterates* its encouragement to UNOPS and other United Nations entities to continue to achieve greater value for money and to take further measures for the purpose of increasing procurement from countries with economies in transition, developing countries and least developed countries.

4 September 2020

2020/21

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session 2020

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its second regular session 2020, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda as orally amended and approved the workplan for its second regular session 2020 (DP/2020/L.3);

Approved the report of the annual session 2020 (DP/2020/18);

Approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2021;

Joint segment

Item 2

Internal audit and investigation

Adopted decision 2020/10 on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigations and management responses;

Item 3

Ethics

Adopted decision 2020/11 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS;

Item 4

Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

Took note of the presentations made by UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;

Item 5

Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2020/12 on the joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy;

Item 6

Working methods of the Executive Board

Adopted decision 2020/13 on the working methods of the Executive Board;

Item 7

UNDP structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2020/14 on the UNDP structured funding dialogue;

Item 8

UNDP evaluation

Adopted decision 2020/15 on UNDP evaluation (including the annual report on evaluation and the evaluation of UNDP support to middle-income countries);

Item 9

UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Africa: Eswatini ([DP/DCP/SWZ/4](#)), Uganda ([DP/DCP/UGA/5](#));

Asia-Pacific: Indonesia ([DP/DCP/IDN/4](#) and Corr.1), Timor-Leste ([DP/DCP/TLS/3](#) and Corr.1);

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Belarus ([DP/DCP/BLR/4](#)), Bosnia and Herzegovina ([DP/DCP/BIH/4](#)), Kazakhstan ([DP/DCP/KAZ/4](#)), Serbia ([DP/DCP/SRB/3](#)), including the results and resources framework for Kosovo³ ([DP/DCP/SRB/3/Add.1](#)), Turkey ([DP/DCP/TUR/4](#)), Turkmenistan ([DP/DCP/TKM/3](#));

Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia ([DP/DCP/COL/3](#));

³ All references to Kosovo are understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Approved the two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022 and three-year extensions of the country programmes for Mauritius and Seychelles from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023 (DP/2020/23);

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bahrain, Cameroon, El Salvador, Guinea-Bissau and Libya (DP/2020/23) and the first two-month extension of the country programme for China from 1 January to 28 February 2021 (DP/2020/23/Add.1), already approved by the Administrator;

Item 10

United Nations Volunteers

Adopted decision 2020/16 on the United Nations Volunteers;

Item 11

United Nations Capital Development Programme

Adopted decision 2020/17 on the midterm review of the UNCDF Strategic Framework, 2018–2021, including the annual report on results achieved in 2019;

UNFPA segment

Item 12

UNFPA structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2020/18 on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue;

Item 13

UNFPA evaluation

Adopted decision 2020/19 on evaluation in UNFPA (including the annual report on the evaluation function and the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action);

Item 14

UNFPA country programmes and related matters

Approved the following country programmes, in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Belarus (DP/FPA/CPD/BLR/3), Bosnia and Herzegovina (DP/FPA/CPD/BIH/3), Kazakhstan (DP/FPA/CPD/KAZ/5), Serbia (DP/FPA/CPD/SRB/2), including the results and resources framework for Kosovo⁴ (DP/FPA/CPD/SRB/2/Add.1), Turkey (DP/FPA/CPD/TUR/7), Turkmenistan (DP/FPA/CPD/TKM/5);

Asia and the Pacific: Indonesia (DP/FPA/CPD/IDN/10 and Corr.1), Timor-Leste (DP/FPA/CPD/TLS/4);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia (DP/FPA/CPD/COL/7)

Took note of the first one-year extensions for the country programmes for Algeria, Cameroon, El Salvador, Lebanon, Libya, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe (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), which were approved by the UNFPA Executive Director;

⁴ All references to Kosovo are understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Approved the two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso, the second, six-month extension for the country programme for Madagascar and the fifth, one-year extension for the country programme for Yemen ([DP/FPA/2020/10](#));

UNOPS segment

Item 15

United Nations Office for Project Services

Adopted decision 2020/15 on the United Nations Office for Project Services;

Item 16

Other matters

Heard a statement by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council.

4 September 2020

Annex II

Membership of the Executive Board in 2020

(Term expires on the last day of the year indicated)

African States: Botswana (2021), Burkina Faso (2020), Cameroon (2021), Egypt (2020), Gambia (2021), Rwanda (2021), Somalia (2022), South Africa (2021).

Asia-Pacific States: Cambodia (2020), China (2022), India (2021), Kuwait (2020), Republic of Korea (2021), Saudi Arabia (2020), Vanuatu (2021).

Eastern European States: Bulgaria (2022), Czech Republic (2022), Russian Federation (2020), Ukraine (2021).

Latin American and Caribbean States: Antigua and Barbuda (2020), Brazil (2020), Colombia (2022), Mexico (2021), Peru (2022).

Western European and other States:* Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands (Kingdom of), United States.

* Western European and other States has its own rotation schedule, which varies every year.

Annex III

Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 29 May 2020

United Nations Development System Reform in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. The President of the Executive Board of UN-Women opened the virtual joint meeting of the Executive Boards (JMB) on 29 May 2020, welcoming fellow Board Presidents; guest speaker, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; members and observers of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP; and the principals/representative of the six participating United Nations (UN) entities. He noted that this was a defining moment for the UN development system. Given the global COVID-19 pandemic, the UN would be expected to be functioning at its best – with effective and efficient coordination, void of overlap among entities. Underscoring the need to focus on already marginalized groups, the President of the UN-Women Executive Board cautioned that the pandemic was likely to also have an impact on public finances around the world, and thus the entire direction of the UN reforms would be all the more important.

2. In her opening address, the Deputy Secretary-General thanked the Executive Boards for their leadership and colleagues particularly at the country level, for their commitment in transforming the UN system. She alluded to the recently concluded ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment, stating that this JMB was an opportunity to ensure that the system-wide guidance of Member States would be effectively taken on board by each governing body. She spoke of the leadership and ownership across governing bodies collectively as being one of the significant features of the UN reform process, that would remain key for success, not only in moving ahead globally on the road to recovery from COVID-19, but also upon progressing through the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Expressing appreciation to all the Principals for their hard work, the Deputy Secretary-General mentioned that the entire UN Sustainable Development Group stepped up to assist in co-creating new mechanisms, guiding and supporting for a new generation of UN country teams. This was implemented, for example, through its leadership in the realignment of internal policies and tools to reflect the new structures and levels of accountability, as well as its financial contributions to the Resident Coordinator system.

4. While acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic presented additional challenges, she emphasized that the UN system was obliged to continue to run at full capacity. She called on participants to use this joint meeting as an accelerator for reforms, channelling attention to five specific areas where the leadership of agencies together with their respective governing bodies, would be critical: 1) Consolidating the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework – effort was still required to ensure this was established as the main planning instrument for UN country teams; 2) Aligning results reporting and harmonizing reporting indicators across entities – it was critical to build on work already done, without necessarily need for the creation of new/additional indicators; 3) Anchoring the new Resident Coordinator system on a strong and sustainable foundation – including through a sustainable funding base for the very critical coordination function. The Deputy Secretary-General took the opportunity to thank Member States for their contributions and for enabling cost-

sharing contributions by all entities in the Executive Boards. She urged all Member States that had not yet done so, to consider a contribution to the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the Resident Coordinator system; 4) Implementing the Management Accountability Framework – while progress was made to date, some provisions were still needed, notably the agreement for stronger coordination of fundraising efforts on the ground; and 5) Realizing mutual commitments of the Funding Compact – although off to a good start with the majority of indicators on track, the Deputy Secretary-General expressed concern about the steady decrease in the share of core budgets of entities of the UN development system – a trend that could seriously affect the quality of support to the 2030 Agenda. The Deputy Secretary-General assured participants of the commitment and readiness of the UN system to work with the governing bodies on seeking and creating solutions.

5. Highlighting the central role of gender equality within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN-Women Executive Director cited examples of coordinated response at global, regional and country levels that facilitated the identification of best practices. This included for instance, UN-Women’s partnership with UNDP and the UN country teams in conducting rapid assessments of COVID-19’s socioeconomic impact in over 30 countries, encompassing all regions. Together with sister entities, UN-Women joined the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG)-level task force to develop the COVID-19 socioeconomic response framework, which profiled pervasive gender inequality, with gender equality in all contexts. Noting the significant spike in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, she mentioned that the EU-UN Spotlight initiative, with UNFPA, UNDP and UN-Women as lead entities, had identified important ways of using existing resources to address this surge. She underscored the importance of supporting frontline gender-based violence service providers and developing innovative technological solutions that have helped urgent response to the needs of survivors seeking safety and support. She urged countries that had not yet begun to treat domestic violence services as essential services, to do so.

6. The UN-Women Executive Director looked forward to continuing to collaborate on “building better” – a term she opined meant to “hardwire women’s economic empowerment, climate-smart agriculture, ending racism and homophobia, and addressing infrastructure deprivation ... with gender equality at the heart of our collective response.”

7. The UNICEF Executive Director mentioned that agencies came together from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to support children and families, building on some joint initiatives undertaken over the last year to save costs and staff time, while achieving efficiencies. One such example was UNICEF’s work with WFP to simplify and co-ordinate the procurement, delivery and distribution of food to prevent and treat malnutrition. Joint work that could save up to 30 per cent in health care training costs and up to \$12.5 million (or 10 per cent), in procurement costs in the medium-term. While joint efforts were being made to scale up for immediate response, focus was being maintained on the long-term needs of communities. She emphasized the significance of flexible funding and prioritizing investment for the future, highlighting areas such as digital connectivity for every school and community, mental health, ending violence, girls’ education and water for all. The UNICEF Executive Director cited her organization’s work with agency partners on the Joint SDG Fund and the Secretary-General’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund for COVID-19. For the future, this represented an important opportunity to strengthen systems, including social protection systems.

8. The UNOPS Executive Director noted the unique nature of the UNOPS business model which allowed for rapid and effective response to requests from governments, international financial institutions, private partners, and UN sister agencies. She

spoke of close coordination with UN agencies at country level and existing and expanding partnerships with international financial institutions to jointly support governments in the context of the COVID-19 response, which centered around three main areas: helping countries prepare; respond; and recover. For example, in partnership with international financial institutions, UNOPS worked to assist governments in establishing and strengthening their national social protection systems, to protect the most vulnerable. The UNOPS Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) initiative helped mobilize private investments in countries where UNOPS operated, while ensuring contributions were making a positive social, environmental, and economic impact. Building capacity of the small and mid-sized enterprises to facilitate access to global markets was another area of work highlighted, since strengthening the private sector was key for economic recovery, social stability, and community resilience.

9. The UNFPA Executive Director reiterated that vulnerable and marginalized populations were struck the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore put to the test the organization's commitment to 'leave no one behind'. UNFPA estimated that the pandemic could result in millions more cases of gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and unintended pregnancies. She emphasized that ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights was therefore lifesaving. She assured that the UNFPA global response to COVID-19 fully aligned with the three pillars of the UN, framed by Agenda 2030. Citing specific country examples of collaboration, she mentioned that along with WHO, UNFPA co-led the drafting of the health pillar of the UN socioeconomic response framework. Together with partners and the UN Secretary-General's office, UNFPA was working on reporting the impact of COVID-19 on issues such as gender, human rights, children, and older persons. As alluded to by the other agency Heads, under the leadership of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, UN country teams were repurposing activities to quickly respond to requests for assistance related to the pandemic. UNFPA was engaged in rapid socioeconomic impact assessments, working jointly with partners to ensure that surveillance and response systems included disaggregated health data; along with UNICEF and WHO, UNFPA were jointly mobilizing resources to strengthen health system resilience to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and continuing to coordinate joint action on prevention and treatment of gender-based violence in humanitarian settings all over the world.

10. The UNDP Administrator mentioned in his remarks that flexibility, speed, agility and a networked approach have redefined how principals lead their respective entities in assisting countries' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, that started as a health crisis and quickly simultaneously became a social, economic and political crisis. With respect to UN system reform, he opined that it was encouraging to witness the UN converge and respond particularly at the country level with a high degree of flexibility. He noted that countries with good quality common country assessments already reflected the ability of the UN system to operate more readily and rapidly, which were critical indicators. These were clear signals of leadership and accountability. As the UN Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General underscored, the responsibility and accountability for a coordinated system-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the country level resided with the Resident Coordinators. With respect to UNDP's role specifically, (with focus on both resident and non-resident UN country teams), since the end of January 2020, the organization took important steps to refocus its own capacity to respond. Immediate priorities and needs were considered, embedded within the overall UN system approach, for a health, humanitarian and socioeconomic response that guided all the entities in their collaborative work. He alluded to the sobering revelation in the latest assessment undertaken by the Human Development Report Office of UNDP on the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human development in countries across the globe. It

found that for the first time in thirty years there would be a reversal in the human development index. Underscoring specific risk to the sustainability of societies, the UNDP Administrator opined that it was the responsibility of the UN system as a whole to work together towards not only helping countries manage the crisis, but also using the opportunity to leverage investment in the kind of economies and societies for which countries were striving, while ensuring a path towards sustainable development.

11. The Assistant Executive Director of WFP, on behalf of the Executive Director, expressed concern that the implications of the socioeconomic fallout could be even more devastating. Estimates indicated that the number of acutely hungry people was likely to double this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic to 260 million. She highlighted the commonalities across the health, human and development systems while speaking of the organization's focus on key areas such as the logistics and supply chain. Alluding to the restrictions on global movement as a result of the pandemic, she outlined WFP's role in this case, to provide logistics services with respect to related response efforts, such as moving equipment, cargo and workers to the frontlines. She opined that the UN's collective role was key in addressing hunger and its socioeconomic impact.

12. WFP worked alongside UNICEF in crafting contributions to the UN Secretary-General's socioeconomic framework on social protection and basic services in order to address growing and emerging needs in the areas of nutrition as well as building resilience to the COVID-19 virus. The WFP Assistant Executive Director, called attention to the more than 300 million children missing out on school meals as a result of pandemic; and the need to ensure that cash-based safety nets continued to be facilitated. She emphasized the significance of food systems to prevent the pandemic from translating into a hunger catastrophe. This was an opportunity to engage and support small farmers in restoring and maintaining their operations – all areas of work which required very strong partnerships across the UN system. The WFP Assistant Executive Director concluded that national response is essential to COVID-19 response and recovery and that the role of the UN was to support national response and to incorporate real-time learning in the process.

13. The President of the UNICEF Executive Board noted that the emergency had shown that much could be achieved through closer inter-agency collaboration, building on collective strengths of the system. The response to the pandemic could further drive efforts towards further UN system reform and innovative partnerships, evidence of which was highlighted by the Principals. She underlined the impact of the pandemic on children, their families and caregivers, that often made them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, such as trafficking, cybercrimes, particularly among girls, migrants and disadvantaged children. She concurred with the UNICEF Executive Director and called for prioritization in investment in all the critical sectors to ensure strong societies, to avoid a generational crisis and noted that this was a testing time for the efficacy of the ongoing reform process, particularly in supporting the most vulnerable countries and populations. She underscored the need for the UN system's efforts to complement those of national governments, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to support their socioeconomic recovery. The UNICEF Executive Board President welcomed that the agencies' response to the pandemic at the mid-point of their strategic plans, would shape programming for the remainder of the planned periods while preserving the gains made towards the SDGs. She reiterated the call for flexible funding to ensure the UN system's rapid and innovative action, with respect to ongoing needs in response to the pandemic, while being mindful that essential ongoing programmes are not jeopardized.

14. The President of the WFP Executive Board commended the redoubling of efforts of the UN system to work jointly considering the pandemic. Sharing his perspective

under the theme of the UN system's continued integrated support, he highlighted three main points, firstly on analysis, referring to the UN framework for immediate socioeconomic response to the pandemic. He viewed this as a welcome comprehensive approach and commended the strong focus on food security, the food systemic risks of COVID-19, as well as the right to food – noting that it would be an important guidance tool among others also in the discussions of the “Rome-based Membership informal Group of Friends for the Food Systems Summit 2021” in preparation for the Summit. He noted however, that the framework lacked clear conceptual connection/complementarity with the other components of the UN system response to COVID-19, particularly with respect to the humanitarian crisis response. Secondly, regarding interagency coordination mechanisms, he proposed further streamlining of the existing interagency coordination mechanisms at headquarters and regional levels, along with eliminating silos, with an even more integrated approach – through stronger linkage with the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and OCHA. Thirdly, on partnerships, the President of the WFP Executive Board further suggested the need to look beyond the UN and the UN development system as a whole, towards for example, including systematically, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in a closer interlinked UN inter agency coordination of DCO and OCHA.

15. The President of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board stated that the challenges of COVID-19 presented an opportunity to test how the reform was working and in a very practical way, to assess the progress and success of some of that work, including the new Resident Coordinator system. The Latin American and Caribbean region witnessed the usefulness of the reform, as well as areas that could be improved and where there was need to strengthen collaboration. He aligned with the WFP Executive Board President on the advantages of widening the scope of collaboration, which he stated should not cease once the pandemic was over, but rather be strengthened to the point where the UN system and its partners were equipped to respond to crises of any kind. Referring to the need to revisit structural arrangements, he expressed this was the moment to assess whether the UN system was currently equipped to respond quickly. In this regard, he noted that there remained room for improvement in response to health crises with respect to how UN aid was moved to affected populations, such as in certain parts of the Latin American and Caribbean region that were still awaiting much needed medical supplies. This was an opportunity to revamp, rethink and rebuild new appropriate systems, he stated – a time to revisit current practice, analyze accordingly and to evaluate the operations of agencies.

16. Member States thanked the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the Principals, Executive Board Members, and the entire UN workforce for coming together and providing updates on their respective work, that continued uninterrupted through the current unprecedented crisis. They acknowledged particularly those working on the frontlines of the pandemic.

17. Delegations generally agreed that focus should be placed on long-term investment and recovery. All joint efforts were now more important than ever in addressing the multi-dimensional and complex challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed. A speaker noted that while the crisis put the spotlight on structural inadequacies and gaps, it was an opportunity to capture and make use of lessons learned and for Executive Board members to use their role in a more strategic manner.

18. Some speakers took the opportunity to pledge their continued support to the UN Funds and Programmes and for their efforts to respond to the pandemic. They opined that agency Heads had clearly demonstrated that implementation of the joint reform agenda had paved the way for enhanced positioning of the UN to assist Member States in their response to the complex impacts of the pandemic, with greater coherence,

collaboration, coordination and efficiency. These efforts were undoubtedly saving millions of lives, especially in countries that already faced other humanitarian crises and development challenges and evidently threatening their achievement of the SDGs.

19. It was noted that in operationalizing the UN framework for immediate socioeconomic response to the pandemic, partnership should be considered as a standard operating principle, in terms of analysis and planning, as well as in how the UN Development System delivered its response. Member States appreciated that work was anchored on comparative advantage of the agencies/funds/programmes/entity, as well as with civil society, host governments, south-south cooperation, the private sector and international financial institutions. One speaker felt there was room to enhance collaboration between international financial institutions and Agencies, Funds and Programmes, stating that a global consensus needed to be reached with international financial institutions to increase resources to alleviate the payment of debt of emerging countries and contribute to their development.

20. Another speaker recalled the sobering assessment of the impact of the pandemic on human development, including the significant level of resources needed and advised on tapping into private finances and capacities of all actors at the global and local levels, in order to reach scale. Feedback was sought from the Principals on how Member States could further support integrated programming, policy advice and coordinated resource mobilization at the Executive Boards, and at the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities (QCPR) in the Fall of 2020 – maintaining focus on partnership; the most vulnerable; the next generation; and collective effort in building back better for more inclusive, resilient sustainable and healthy communities. A delegation reiterated the central role of gender equality in building resilience within societies, commending the active engagement of UN Women in alleviating the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, including its efforts in addressing gender-based violence and collection of gender disaggregated data among other areas. It was highlighted that the Commission on the Status of Women was the first intergovernmental body to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, that necessitated the scaling down of its activities. It was therefore important to reiterate the urgent need for accelerating the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, including the recent commitment in the form of the Political Declaration adopted on 9 March 2020 on the anniversary of the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women.

21. The African Group members of the Executive Board of UNICEF in a joint statement, emphasized the pandemic's disproportionate and concrete impact on children, as for example not only were hundreds of millions of children out of school facing a number of threats to their safety and well-being, but also family incomes were under severe threat or loss – situations whereby children often bear the consequences. Member States cautioned that if the impact of COVID-19 on children was not immediately addressed, global efforts and positive results so far since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, could be severely impacted. They called for redoubling of collective efforts for children not only for them to survive but also to reach their full potential. It was stated that more financial and human resources should be mobilized bearing in mind that this was the last Decade of Action of the SDGs.

22. Speaking as a donor, the European Union (EU) outlined the various impacts of the pandemic on societies around the world that threatened the hard-won progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and commended the UN Secretary-General's leadership throughout the pandemic. It was stated that the EU's efforts resonated well with the UN Secretary-General's call to "Recover better" by building more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable societies. Their overall impression based on

presentations to date was that COVID-19 for all the threat that it represented to the international community's common goals, served as an accelerator in bringing the agencies and the UN country teams closer together, fostering enhanced cooperation. The need to maintain this momentum was underscored so that the reformed UN Development System emerge stronger from the current crisis. The delegation expressed willingness to strengthen cooperation with the UN at all levels, notably with the UN Resident Coordinators and its country teams in the field. Highlighting major interventions, the delegation spoke of the "Team Europe" Global Response to COVID-19 to the tune of currently EUR 23 billion, that supported partner countries in addressing urgent needs. It was emphasized that there was need to ensure that women were actively involved in the COVID-19 response, as well as long-term recovery, in order to prevent progress made on gender equality from being reversed by the crisis. Increasing the cross-pillar coherence of the UN's work, as well as advancing on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, would therefore be of critical importance to address the multiple situations of fragility and significant humanitarian situations that were further exacerbated by the pandemic.

23. Acknowledging the value of the active support of the UN at the national level, delegations spoke of their own efforts to prevent and mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A delegation spoke of the implementation of immigration policies and other related experiences, in addition to data gathered during the outbreak assuring that they would be continuously shared with the international community. Another speaker mentioned its efforts to simultaneously take all possible measures to stimulate economic growth by investing a portion of its GDP to this cause. National authorities recognized the importance of acting with a sense of urgency, considering the best practices around the world. Participants were reminded that every effort should be made to ensure that even during this urgent time of crisis, other areas of cooperation, such as education, income generation, inequalities, and more importantly climate change, should not be neglected.

24. Reiterating the pivotal role of the Resident Coordinator in delivering robust and coherent UN support at a national level, it was also emphasized that this role included ensuring that agencies did not compete for limited resources. It was also important to ensure complementarity within the various funding channels responding to COVID-19, while maintaining efforts to incentivize private sector partnerships, as well as inter-agency collaboration and coherence. The heads of agencies also encouraged delegations to embrace the challenge posed by the pandemic to make the new normal better and focus on support for young people.

25. The UN-Women Executive Board President in his closing remarks, emphasized the unprecedented nature of the current global crisis and significance of the reaching global scale in the UN's collective response, working 'as one' but not alone. Solidarity was truly needed, especially in relation to the successful implementation of the UN development system reform. He thanked the Deputy Secretary-General, UN entities and Member States for their interactive discussion and invaluable inputs, as well as the Board Secretariat for organizing and ensuring smooth running of this virtual joint session.

