



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 2021***

**Economic and Social Council
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Note

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Part one
First regular session 2021

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 1 to 4 February 2021**

I. Organizational matters

1. The first regular session 2021 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held virtually for the third time, on an exceptional basis, owing to the continued COVID-19 pandemic, from 1 to 4 February 2021. The newly elected President of the Board welcomed delegations and thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their leadership and commitment to the work of the Board in 2020. She 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 2021:

President: H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva	(Bulgaria)
Vice-President H.E. Ms. Yoka Brandt	(The Netherlands)
Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Lang Yabou	(The Gambia)
Vice-President: H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima	(Bangladesh)
Vice-President: Undetermined at time of writing	(Latin America and the Caribbean)

3. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its first regular session 2021 (DP/2021/L.1 and Corr.1) and approved the report of the second regular session 2020 (DP/2021/1). The Board adopted the annual workplan for 2021 (DP/2021/CRP.1) and approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2021.

4. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2020 appeared in document DP/2021/2, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).

5. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2021/3 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2021:

Annual session 2021:	7 to 11 June 2021 (New York)
Second regular session 2021:	30 August to 3 September 2021

Statement by the President of the Board

6. The new President of the Board said 2020 was an extraordinary year in which the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges of unimaginable magnitude. The pandemic showed the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism and need for the international community to work together to ensure recovery. The United Nations development system had a crucial role to play helping countries build back better and overcome socioeconomic challenges the pandemic had worsened. The Board's role was to ensure the organizations were equipped with guidance and tools to address those challenges.

7. In 2021, the Board would focus on: (a) ensuring the organizations' strategic plans, 2020-2025, were adopted; (b) achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Decade of Action; (c) providing space for constructive, active, strategic, inclusive, transparent consultations in the Board and between the Board and the organizations across intersessional periods; (d) encouraging Board engagement with stakeholders such as civil society and private sector; (e) pursuing cooperation and coordination with the executive boards of the other funds, programmes and specialized agencies; (f) integrating outcomes of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/75/233) in the organizations' policies/work through Board oversight; and (g) improving Board effectiveness through pragmatic results-oriented, proactive approaches to providing guidance.

Joint segment

II. Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

8. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, introduced the UNDP report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2019 (DP/2021/3). The Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, introduced the UNFPA report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2019 (DP/FPA/2021/1). 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, 2019 (DP/OPS/2021/1). Also tabled was the report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2019 for the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (DP/2021/4).

UNDP

9. A group of delegations commended UNDP for its fifteenth consecutive clean audit and supported the Board's recommendation for swift implementation of Board of Auditors' recommendations, especially those outstanding. They commented, regarding UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects, that timely implementation of outstanding recommendations on risk management, procurement, vendor oversight and internal controls might have mitigated challenges. They welcomed management's efforts to resolve issues of UNDP governance of GEF-funded projects through the management action plan and looked forward to steps to address Member States' concerns. Swift implementation of actions in the management action plan would address governance/oversight shortcomings. They recognized UNDP measures to address capacity issues behind policy breaks that led to lapses in oversight and accountability; and expected continued monitoring/reporting as measures were implemented and capacity challenges resolved. They said robust policies had no value without sustained, accountable compliance, backed by a conflict-of-interest-free management structure and division of labour for programming and oversight. Both required changes in culture and management accountability lines, which the Board expected in a strategy on institutional challenges. They anticipated the results of the Management Accountability Review Panel and consistent reporting from the Administrator's Office on the Strategic Controlling Unit's work.

10. Noting the generic-level findings and recommendations, a delegation encouraged the Board of Auditors to include in future a summary of key findings and recommendations from country visits and share summary findings on operational units to compensate for the lack of independent audits required in donor accountability frameworks.

UNFPA and UNOPS

11. Delegations made no specific comments regarding UNFPA and UNOPS.

12. In response, the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, said UNDP took a whole-of-organization approach to management oversight of the GEF portfolio and was putting controls in place. She assured Board members UNDP was engaging with GEF-related issues raised and would report to the Board as promised. Similarly, UNDP was in the process of setting up a new office to pursue organization-wide compliance with change-culture requirements.

13. On the generic findings, the Director of External Audit from Germany and Lead UNDP Auditor commented that when taking over the UNDP audit exercise, Germany decided to begin with generic questions before transitioning to the more specific.

Field visits remained integral to audit methodology and did not exclude findings on different entities and country offices in future. The auditors used a careful approach to safeguard against erroneously concluding an issue of concern to a particular country was a broader trend affecting the entire organization.

14. 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, 2019.

III. Follow-up to UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting

15. The Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, and the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) gave a presentation on the joint UNDP and UNFPA report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) ([DP-FPA/2021/1](#)), which was followed by introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management and Governance, ad interim, UNAIDS.

16. A group of delegations emphasized the need for continued strong response to the HIV pandemic, especially given COVID-19's effects on health services. It was important to focus on populations experiencing least progress, especially key populations, adolescent girls, and young women, and prioritize actions within the new global AIDS strategy, 2021-2026, where progress was most needed. The renewed engagement of UNAIDS co-sponsors and others was crucial, as was the right architecture to deliver. They welcomed UNAIDS co-sponsors' revised guiding principles and accountability framework. UNAIDS was urged to respond to Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in its review of the management and administration of UNAIDS ([JIU/REP/2019/7](#)) and the independent evaluation of the United Nations system response to AIDS, 2016-2019, to ensure UNAIDS was responsive to HIV response opportunities and challenges. The group acknowledged UNDP and UNFPA work and the important UNFPA contribution to realizing the rights and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. They welcomed lessons on effective approaches for delivering services, particularly linking and integrating sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, HIV, and sexual/gender-based violence programmes and services. They welcomed UNFPA promotion of comprehensive sexuality education but stressed the need for better integration of HIV prevention/care and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights services to prevent sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. Increasing choice/access to family planning options remained critical. They appreciated UNFPA co-convening the Global HIV Prevention Coalition and stressed the need to improve United Nations system capacity to address underlying drivers of new infections. They acknowledged UNDP work to support countries reforming discriminatory laws/policies on HIV and health issues that perpetuated exclusion/marginalization. They welcomed acknowledgement of stigma and discrimination as major impediments to HIV responses; UNDP and UNFPA had important roles addressing those barriers and promoting rights-based policies/programmes. The group urged UNDP and UNFPA to work with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and partners in countries. They looked forward to working with Board colleagues and the Programme Coordinating Board to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 in line with achieving universal health coverage.

17. One delegation said the next global AIDS strategy had to build on existing gains and draw on lessons to address uneven progress across countries/communities. Prevention should be a cornerstone of global, regional, and country efforts, especially for key populations. Addressing structural/social causes of stigma and discrimination against key populations and people living with HIV/AIDS was critical.

18. Seeking clarification, a delegation, expressing full support for the work of UNAIDS and its partners, questioned the use of the term ‘rights’ in the phrase ‘sexual and reproductive health and rights’, stating that the term as used in the joint report did not adhere to internationally agreed or recognized language for official United Nations documentation.

19. In response, the Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, recognized delegations’ call to maintain a strong response to the HIV pandemic throughout COVID-19 and focus on key populations. On use of the term ‘rights’, recognizing social/cultural concerns, the Director said United Nations system work was underpinned by human rights and rights-based approaches. Those approaches, which addressed underlying issues impeding service delivery/access, helped ensure sexual and reproductive health services reached most affected populations, improved national health systems, and achieved the Goals.

20. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) assured Board members that UNFPA would continue to focus on the most vulnerable and those most at risk of being left behind by expanding access to sexual and reproductive health services through the Global HIV Prevention Coalition. Regarding the question on ‘rights’, drawing attention to the Fund’s previous written response to the delegation, she took note of the point raised and said that UNFPA was guided by its strategic plan and ready to clarify further bilaterally as needed.

21. The Director, HIV, Health and Development Group, UNDP, commented that UNAIDS strong focus on, and integrated approach to, HIV prevention was crucial to address social and structural barriers to HIV generally, particularly those affecting key populations, young women, and girls. That focus would be reflected in the new global AIDS strategy

22. The Executive Board took note of the joint UNDP and UNFPA report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS ([DP-FPA/2021/1](#)).

UNDP segment

Statement by the Administrator and interactive dialogue

Statement by the Administrator

23. In his opening remarks ([available on the UNDP website](#)), the UNDP Administrator stressed that humanity was living through a development emergency characterized by successive crises of which the COVID-19 pandemic was the most recent. Global human development was set to drop for the first time in 30 years and would continue to do so unless humanity addressed the dual crises of extreme poverty and inequality, and climate change. UNDP was at the heart of the United Nations COVID-19 response, leading the socioeconomic response for communities most affected by poverty, inequality, and marginalization. That included addressing the ‘shadow pandemic’ of rising gender-based violence and going beyond income in measuring vulnerability, helping UNDP with partners work across diverse development contexts in an integrated way.

24. The Administrator said a whole-of-system approach was needed to tackle the multifaceted nature of the simultaneous crises, which underlined the importance of United Nations reforms in collectively demonstrating the full potential of a coherent, effective, repositioned United Nations development system. UNDP was focused on delivering results and emphasizing the mandates of the 2020 quadrennial review and unique role UNDP could play with other United Nations system partners to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals during the Decade of Action. Leveraging its integrator role as technical lead of the system-wide socioeconomic response to COVID-19, UNDP conducted more than 120 socioeconomic impact assessments in 93 countries and five regions and contributed to United Nations efforts that tripled the number of national socioeconomic response plans between July-December 2020. The assessments and plans built on evidence provided through mechanisms such as the UNDP Data Futures Platform, the UNDP–United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) gender response tracker, and with UNCDF the inclusive digital economy scorecard.

25. In 2020, UNDP reprogrammed and mobilized over \$982 million to support the COVID-19 response while working with partners to help countries develop integrated national financing frameworks so they could build forward better from COVID-19. To mobilize additional funds, UNDP had established, as part of its Prepare, Respond and Recover offer, the Rapid Response Facility to quickly deploy finances to programme countries. Looking beyond the immediate emergency, UNDP created its COVID-19 2.0 offer – Beyond Recovery, Towards 2030 – focused on helping countries set priorities in four integrated areas: *governance*, *social protection*, the *green economy*, and *digital disruption*, grounded in gender equality and human rights and financed through the Rapid Financing Facility.

26. UNDP continued to pursue its People for 2030 strategy to attract, retain and develop top talent and accelerate its transformational digital strategy. Central to both was the UNDP commitment to create a safe, inclusive working environment fostering personal growth and development and to prevent all forms of discrimination and harassment, including sexual misconduct. In 2020, UNDP achieved a balanced budget for the fourth consecutive year and the second-highest delivery rate in six years and was on track to meet its four-year management efficiency target. The organization reached its highest volume of regular (core) contributions since 2016 while other (non-core) resources continued to rise. It received an unqualified audit opinion for the fifteenth consecutive year. UNDP would continue to deliver on its six signature solutions across three integrated development contexts (governance and fragility, poverty and inequality, and the climate promise), helping countries survive/thrive in the next frontier for human development. The new strategic plan, 2022-2025, would respond to the need for an equitable, green transformation and focus on what UNDP does and how.

27. Across the Board, delegations welcomed the Administrator's vision for the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, linking it to the 2030 Agenda, focused on recovery. The new plan should reflect the indivisible nature of the Goals based on the three dimensions of sustainable development. They commended UNDP leading the system-wide resilience-focused socioeconomic response to COVID-19, including mobilizing funds through the Rapid Financing Facility. Many delegations expressed support for designating vaccines a global public good and continued deployment of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, including the COVAX Facility. They commended UNDP for undertaking socioeconomic impact assessments with partners which had strengthened national COVID-19 response plans. They welcomed the COVID-19 2.0 offer focused on governance, social protection, the green economy, and digital disruption, as windows through which to tackle extreme poverty, inequality, and

climate change, grounded in gender equality and human rights. They expressed support for the organization's continued commitment to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and commended it for its 2020 strong financial standing and consecutive clean audit opinions. UNDP should continue to build on its track record of transparency and accountability.

28. A group of delegations, recognizing the simultaneous crises, said that recovery demanded a green transition aligned with the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda. They welcomed UNDP results in 2020, stronger cooperation with the international financial institutions (IFIs), and impact of its digital transformation in combatting COVID-19 at country level. On the strategic plan, 2022-2025, they said promoting inclusive, accountable, transparent governance at country level remained a UNDP hallmark, as was its contribution to poverty reduction through a gender lens. UNDP should continue to prioritize social protection/inequality as drivers of green, fair socioeconomic recovery. Recognizing its crisis prevention/resilience-building role, they encouraged UNDP to engage with United Nations organizations at country level in addressing COVID-19's socioeconomic impacts in crisis settings, including through a human security lens, building on its integrator role in the humanitarian-development-peace collaborative approach. They commended the People for 2030 strategy as a tool for strong ethics and delivering high-quality results. UNDP had an important role in wealth generation and distribution among societies through its work with the private sector and innovative approaches.

29. Another group said the 2020 quadrennial review gave the United Nations system a strategic pathway for greener, inclusive development within the COVID-19 context. A robust monitoring and reporting framework had to underpin the review, which the organizations should work collaboratively to design. The framework should be focused, with a clear set of evidence-based indicators that organizations would incorporate in their results frameworks. They expected United Nations development organizations to act in consolidating reforms, ensuring full implementation of the management and accountability framework, increasing efficiencies through harmonized business operations, and aligning activities with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The new strategic plans of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies should be anchored in the pillars of United Nations reform. They encouraged the organizations to make progress on the interlinked climate-biodiversity agendas, including system-wide commitment to mainstream climate/environment-responsive approaches in programming, helping countries achieve Paris Agreement commitments, and reduce environmental footprint. The organizations should work to create a socially inclusive world where the needs of the most vulnerable were met and no one was left behind. The United Nations development system had to strengthen its gender mainstreaming and equality expertise and accelerate girls' education and their full realization of human rights through better coordination and collaboration among humanitarian-development-peace-security entities. United Nations organizations were urged to engage in early joint risk-informed analysis and planning and ensure a conflict-sensitive approach that contributed to collective outcomes.

30. A group of delegations from the small island developing states (SIDS) supported the UNDP role within the United Nations development system in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring timely, universal access to vaccines, and addressing logistical challenges. UNDP should continue to work with partners to strengthen the health response and economic recovery, including through vaccine distribution tracking. They welcomed UNDP lead in creating a multidimensional vulnerability index that reflected environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities and urged UNDP to work with governments, financial institutions, and private sector to tie the

index to international aid. Pooled funding and joint programming should be United Nations system priorities in addressing SIDS evolving challenges.

31. Delegations from the least developed countries (LDCs) welcomed UNDP prioritization of poverty and inequality in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, and underscored the need for a new poverty paradigm with UNDP support and leadership. Noting their weak health systems and fragile economies, delegations called on UNDP to work with partners to ensure the most vulnerable were not left behind, including through development finance, debt initiatives and special financing. They expressed support for the Administrator's prioritizing access to COVID-19 vaccines to everyone, everywhere by transferring technologies and intellectual property rights to LDCs through the United Nations Technology Bank. COVID-19 lessons would help inform Goals implementation, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, and Agenda 2063. They commended UNDP transformative work through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the Tony Elumelu Foundation.

32. Delegations from middle income countries (MICs), noting the major development setbacks due to COVID-19, reiterated the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty and country classifications. They welcomed proposed steps towards a multidimensional vulnerability index and sought UNDP leadership helping countries bypass the middle-income trap, stimulate economies, mobilize funding, close the digital gap, and devise integrated national financing frameworks, focused on building national capacities. The rising violence against women during the pandemic pointed to the urgency for universal health coverage to countering future crises. Nationally determined priorities/ownership should drive all measures taken. They sought details on how UNDP would use South-South cooperation to drive results in the strategic plan, 2022-2025.

33. In response, the Administrator said access to vaccines and technology transfer would remain UNDP short-term priorities against COVID-19, including through the United Nations Technology Bank and intellectual property rights transfer. At country level, in partnership with United Nations organizations, UNDP focused on strengthening institutional capabilities, logistics and infrastructure to roll out vaccination programmes and maintain testing, tracing, and monitoring. UNDP was capitalizing on its accelerator labs network, reaching out to local entrepreneurs and innovators, and providing policy and innovation capacity to country teams. Globally, UNDP advocated for equitable access to and distribution of vaccines.

34. As part of its COVID-19 work, UNDP continued to focus on poverty and inequality, helping countries identify those most at risk. UNDP promoted incentives for greater international finance and investment in the 2030 Agenda through thought leadership and empirical analysis, helping LDCs, MICs and SIDS offset pandemic-induced shrinking fiscal space. That included work through the multidimensional poverty index to address concerns about graduation, categorization, vulnerability, and inequality. In country, UNDP worked through a bottom-up approach, including in crises, to shape the new poverty paradigm and its COVID-19-related implications, in partnership with IFIs and regional development banks, to develop common analysis and deploy international instruments. UNDP relevancy in MICs did not diminish upon countries' graduation, indicating the need to rethink development financing and business to reflect a renewed engagement with MICs based on their evolving needs.

35. The Administrator said the Funding Compact remained ideal for mobilizing multi-year commitments to core resources and fighting COVID-19. The Funding Compact had to continue creating enabling conditions for United Nations reform that drove those efforts. The Joint SDG Fund played a key part driving delivery at country level, developing integrated national financing frameworks and public-private financing, and would eventually incorporate the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund.

UNDP worked through its SDG Impact initiative to devise new norms/standards for raising equities/bonds to integrate different SDG strands in national investment and financing. UNDP was uniquely placed to offer a platform interlinking the Goals so investments in climate impacted poverty and inequality. The Administrator appealed to Member States to maintain contributions to official development assistance during the pandemic.

36. The UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025, would focus on accelerating the impact of the *#NextGeneration* UNDP portfolio/corporate structure, with programming that reflected COVID-19, the 2020 quadrennial review, poverty, and inequality, including through South-South cooperation. The new plan would refine the UNDP role in a renewed multilateralism, recognizing national ownership, the UNDP integrator role, and normative and operational responsibilities, underpinned by strong oversight, accountability, and transparency. The 2020 quadrennial review's stamp on the new plan would feature in its crosscutting themes (gender, youth, digital, climate, integrated policy solutions). Scaling up its engagement with United Nations organizations through its integrator role to deliver on the quadrennial review, UNDP would play an increasingly significant role as bridge-builder in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and in conceptually evolving the collective United Nations system approach in crisis settings, developing a more adaptive, agile, relevant response.

IV. Human Development Report

37. The Director, Human Development Report Office, presented an oral report on the *Human Development Report 2020: The New Frontier: Human Development in the Anthropocene*, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/264, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, the Goals, COVID-19 and the connected narrative of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 reports.

38. A group of delegations stressed the value of the *Human Development Report* and its ground-breaking, transformative impact over a thirty-year period. The reports changed how development policy was viewed, as gross domestic product was no longer the sole measure. Human development reflected not only the generation of wealth but its distribution among populations and human economic activity's impact on the planet. The 2020 report was ambitious, comprehensive, inspirational, and provided relevant indicators and recommendations to tackle the Anthropocene challenges. Highlighting humanity's unprecedented, profound environment impact, the report pointed to ways humanity can wield transformative change through new social norms, innovative incentives and local solutions that work with nature. Its grounding in scientific understanding of material consumption and carbon footprints constituted an important platform for highlighting challenges to sustainability and human development. They encouraged UNDP and the United Nations system to use the pressure-adjusted human development index with other human development indicator indexes and communicate its relevance to Member States.

39. Other delegations underscored their commitment to achieving global carbon neutrality through green growth strategies in partnership with UNDP and United Nations system. They welcomed the development of the report's comprehensive indicators that gauged sustainability and resilience.

40. In response, the Director, Human Development Report Office, looked forward to continued strong engagement and dialogue with Board members.

41. The Executive Board took note of the presentation of the oral report on the *Human Development Report 2020*.

V. Country programmes and related matters

42. The Acting Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and provided an overview of 11 country programme documents and 12 country programme extensions. In turn, the regional directors for Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided details from the regional perspectives.

43. Among general comments on individual country programmes, there was expression of appreciation for the proactive, productive, effective UNDP engagement in addressing Member States' concerns regarding the CPDs and the collective commitment to Board oversight and consensus-based adoption of CPDs. It was highlighted that CPDs were organization-specific and should be targeted and impartial and not advance organizations' own global programmatic and fundraising objectives.

44. The delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan requested that their statements be reflected in the official record of the first regular session 2021, as provided in the following links: (a) [statement by Armenia](#); and (b) [statement by Azerbaijan](#).

45. The Executive Board, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, reviewed and approved the country programmes documents for Azerbaijan ([DP/DCP/AZE/5](#)), China ([DP/DCP/CHN/5](#)), Côte d'Ivoire ([DP/DCP/CIV/3](#)), Georgia ([DP/DCP/GEO/4](#)), Mexico ([DP/DCP/MEX/3](#)), North Macedonia ([DP/DCP/MKD/4](#)), Panama ([DP/DCP/PAN/4](#)), Somalia ([DP/DCP/SOM/4](#)), Tunisia ([DP/DCP/TUN/3](#)), Uruguay ([DP/DCP/URY/4](#)) and Uzbekistan ([DP/DCP/UZB/4](#)).

46. The Executive Board approved the second six-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar and the second one-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Guatemala, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and Yemen as contained in document [DP/2021/5](#), as well as the fourth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, as contained in document [DP/2021/5/Add.1](#).

47. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Argentina, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and the Maldives, as contained in document [DP/2021/5](#), and the first six-month extension of the country programme for Armenia, as contained in document [DP/2021/5/Add.2](#).

VI. Evaluation

48. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, presented the evaluation of UNDP support to climate change adaptation ([DP/2021/6](#)), evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries ([DP/2021/8](#)), and evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach ([DP/2021/10](#)). The Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, provided the management response to the evaluation of UNDP support to climate change adaptation ([DP/2021/7](#)), the Director, Crisis Bureau, UNDP, provided the management response to the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries ([DP/2021/9](#)), and the Regional Director, ad interim, Regional Bureau for Arab States, UNDP, provided the management response to the evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach ([DP/2021/11](#)).

Evaluation of UNDP support to climate change

49. Delegations supported the findings and recommendations, and management's commitment to acting on them, and encouraged UNDP to build on them when developing its strategic plan, 2021-2025. Delegations commended UNDP achievements and positioning as a key multilateral partner for climate action. UNDP should continue to mainstream climate risk, gender equality and women's empowerment throughout its development portfolio and prioritize private sector climate-focused engagement. SIDS deserved prioritization in the UNDP adaptation portfolio, particularly through vertical funds.

50. A group of delegations said UNDP should: (a) further identify pathways to leverage policy and system changes by better organizing its adaptation portfolio, undetermined by funding streams, so adaptation objectives adhered to the same standards and methodology. UNDP should act to reduce fragmentation in its adaptation portfolio, collaborate in synergy with its adaptation partners, share lessons, and strengthen national capacities in SIDS and LDCs; (b) intensify mainstreaming of climate risks throughout its development portfolio and at national and subnational levels, including implementation of new climate-risk standards, screening procedures and better reporting. UNDP should showcase its climate risk work with partners and United Nations system; and (c) develop its adaptation portfolio's gender focus while management supports and reports on gender equality and women's empowerment in the portfolio.

51. Delegations from SIDS welcomed UNDP technical assistance and support in accessing vertical funds and climate-focused technologies. Recognizing challenges UNDP faced ensuring effective oversight and tailored solutions in SIDS, due to the multi-country office set-up and unpredictable funding, they asked more core resources be allocated to SIDS climate portfolio.

52. The co-partners of the twenty-sixth United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties 2021 encouraged UNDP to prioritize partnerships across the multilateral system and requested details on a long-term strategy for partnerships with United Nations agriculture and food security organizations. They welcomed UNDP private sector partnering and efforts to attract private investment/expertise, including through public-private climate-focused initiatives. They concurred with the evaluation's recommendation that UNDP strengthen its technical capacity and coordination for disaster-risk resilience.

53. In response, the Director, Independent Evaluation Office said the UNDP climate change mandate flowed from the 2020 quadrennial review and was based on strong cooperation, partnerships, and evidence. Stronger UNDP climate-focused partnerships in agriculture and food security, especially with United Nations Rome-based agencies, would be valuable.

54. The Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, said UNDP was exploring concepts such as the multidimensional vulnerability index to support increased funding and access to financing and was prepared to work with the Board to review eligibility criteria for core resources to benefit SIDS. UNDP also engaged in partnerships for climate-focused financing through bilateral donors and United Nations agriculture and food security agencies. UNDP private sector partnerships were key in exploring innovative schemes that expanded beyond conventional financing in moving from funding to financing. Gender equality was central to UNDP climate work, notably its environment/energy portfolio, financed through vertical funds that helped countries integrate gender in national climate policies and plans. UNDP climate risk screening was essential to its social and environmental standards

and procedures, updated in 2021, and integral to common country analysis and cooperation frameworks.

Evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries

55. A group of delegations said UNDP should build on its contributions and comparative advantages helping conflict-affected countries develop more strategic engagement with partners. UNDP should promote prevention and inclusive, accountable governance, applying a more, strategic medium-to-long-term vision. They commended its strategic emphasis on gender equality in crises, concurring UNDP should further engage women as agents of change for sustainable, transformative development. UNDP should do more to ensure policy coherence at country level, and its regional bureaux should work with the Crisis Bureau to ensure UNDP development programmes were context-appropriate and consistent with policies and good practice. UNDP had a special integrator role mobilizing partnerships around sustained collective engagement to tackle crosscutting challenges in conflict-affected countries and supporting collective analysis, outcomes, and coordination.

56. Another group said UNDP had a critical role addressing root causes of fragility in partnership with the United Nations system and endorsed a global UNDP leadership role in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They welcomed the new framework for development solutions for crisis and fragility and the new gender and crisis engagement facility and asked how UNDP would reflect its comparative advantages in preventing violent extremism, interlinked risks, and early warning. UNDP should empower the Crisis Bureau to mainstream its expertise organization-wide to bolster its knowledge base, learning culture, and programming. UNDP should also pursue long-term, systematic approaches to governance, stabilization, livelihoods, and conflict prevention, anchored at local level and informed by conflict/political economy analyses. They encouraged UNDP to show greater transparency through better monitoring and evaluation in conflict-affected countries.

57. Other delegations welcomed the Global Policy Network supporting organization-wide policy coherence for conflict-affected countries backed by technical expertise to strengthen the regional bureaux. They sought details on how UNDP would strengthen its cooperation with humanitarian agencies and connect emergency assistance and reconstruction to build back better; how the new UNDP conflict prevention offer differed from that in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021; and if the evaluation reflected the UNDP conflict prevention scope in Board decision 2017/30.

58. In response, the Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, said the evaluation report recognized the UNDP contribution to conflict prevention lay within its national capacity strengthening work to reduce risk of conflict in accordance with national policies and priorities.

59. The Director, Crisis Bureau, UNDP, said UNDP would engage with partners in developing its new framework for crisis and fragility development solutions. Discussions would focus on devising innovative approaches to prevention, early warning, social cohesion, inequality, basic services, and climate. The UNDP prevention offer included a medium-to-long-term vision in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, focused on development funding and financing for prevention. The offer would embody a cohesive, conflict-sensitive approach and joint analysis backed by evidence. UNDP would continue to be a knowledge hub for crisis and fragility, working with country and regional offices, through the Global Policy Network, engagement between the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and Crisis Bureau, and its integrator role in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach

60. Delegations appreciated UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response, addressing challenges faced both by host communities and refugees, and humanitarian and resilience needs, in an integrated manner through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan at country level. The importance of the UNDP–United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) partnership in the successful coordination of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan was noted. One delegation stressed the need to address crisis and development challenges within the Syrian Arab Republic as crucial to enabling the safe return of refugees and ensuring their legitimate right of repatriation. The delegation suggested that, to achieve safe and voluntary repatriation, UNDP and the international community should focus first on rebuilding affected regions through integrated early recovery projects for basic infrastructure.

61. Another delegation commended UNDP for its support to Syrian refugees in host countries. The delegation reaffirmed its position that reconstruction and development activities should not take place within the Syrian Arab Republic until there was significant progress on the political process. The delegation sought clarification on UNDP support to local host governments to promote refugee protection at community level and mitigate discrimination against disadvantaged groups among refugees and hosts communities, and on UNDP advocacy for an inclusive refugee approach.

62. In response, the Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, noted that the evaluation report covered UNDP work at the municipal level in host countries which presented scope for further strengthening, as part of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, through support for critical service provisions that would benefit both refugees and host communities.

63. The Director, ad interim, Regional Bureau for Arab States, UNDP, emphasized that while UNDP supported the principle of voluntary, safe, dignified refugee return, the evaluation focused on UNDP support to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan and host countries' capacity in the region. At local level, UNDP worked with UNHCR, monitoring discrimination and tensions, and with host communities on social inclusion, in line with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan and related programming.

64. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/2 on UNDP evaluation.

UNFPA segment

Statement by the Executive Director

65. In her address (available on the [UNFPA website](#)), the Executive Director said UNFPA was tackling COVID-19 head on, learning, adapting and pursuing opportunities to work better against it. The pandemic underscored the relevancy of the Fund's mandate and impacts of undermining access to essential sexual and reproductive health services. COVID-19 was hitting the health and rights of women and girls hardest. The UNFPA COVID-19 response reaffirmed the centrality of the three transformative results – zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal death, and zero gender-based violence – and underscored the need for a human rights-based approach, adaptive programming, and universal health coverage that left no one behind. The Executive Director reaffirmed that the rights and needs of women and girls were not negotiable.

66. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights were the driving force behind the strategic plan, 2022-2025, which UNFPA would use to accelerate and scale up progress and drive a global call to action. It was important to use pandemic response lessons to build forward better. Partnerships were essential, as was greater United Nations cohesion.

67. Innovation in digital health and population data were helping UNFPA identify and reach those furthest behind. The Fund was scaling up investments to improve population data quality, usability and accessibility and was building country capacities to use geospatial information to map vulnerability, using the COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard and the Intimate Partner Violence Dashboard. Locally, digital technologies, such as telemedicine, were enabling health-care professionals to reach those furthest behind. In 2020, such adaptive programming helped UNFPA and partners reach nearly 50 million women and young people with sexual and reproductive health services and offered a roadmap to expand access to services post-pandemic and in the new strategic plan.

68. Throughout the pandemic, UNFPA continued to deliver sexual and reproductive health services in complex crises. UNFPA launched the 2021 Humanitarian Action Overview, appealing for \$818 million to help the world's most vulnerable women and girls. The proportion of UNFPA humanitarian funding continued to grow, increasing to around 38 per cent of co-financing in 2020. Of approximately \$270 million received for humanitarian action, about \$94 million was for COVID-19. On the ground, championing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, UNFPA advanced its work on localization, case management, community-awareness, and safe reporting mechanisms. The new humanitarian supplies strategy would strengthen the Fund's capacity to deliver lifesaving supplies. UNFPA was working with United Nations organizations to fully implement the principles of the 2020 quadrennial review.

69. UNFPA had a zero-tolerance policy towards misconduct or abusive behaviour, all forms of harassment and discrimination, including based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability. UNFPA worked to address the widening inequalities COVID-19 had laid bare and continued to address structural inequalities to counter racism and foster a culture of civility and respect for diversity and inclusion. In January 2021, the Executive Director assumed the Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for Humanitarian Affairs in which she would focus on bolstering country mechanisms, improving access to quality assistance and information, and strengthening coordination and coherence.

70. In 2020, UNFPA exceeded its funding targets. Resource contributions were expected to reach over \$1.2 billion, fully 21 per cent above the \$1 billion target. Core funding was expected to reach around \$416 million and co-financing \$793 million. The Fund sought new, diverse partnerships to help take results to scale. Through its 2021 core donor campaign, UNFPA aimed to reach 150 core contributors. UNFPA needed to expand and diversify its donor base, including from programme countries. Given the estimated \$26.4 billion needed to achieve the three zeros by 2030 far exceeded current investment, UNFPA was shifting from funding to financing. The UNFPA Supplies Partnership was helping reinvigorate its engagement with a wide range of partners. In 2020, UNFPA signed 114 new partnership agreements, attracted 70 first-time partners, and mobilized over \$41 million from the private sector, \$8 million of which benefitted the COVID-19 response.

71. Across the Board, delegations commended UNFPA for its agile, impactful response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They welcomed its coordinating role in the United Nations system COVID-19 response as lead agency for maternal health, youth,

gender and distribution of sanitation and hygiene kits for women. UNFPA should continue to lead in protecting hard-won gains in sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and accelerating progress toward the Goals. They expected the new strategic plan to reaffirm the Fund's mandate to implement the ICPD Programme of Action and Nairobi Summit outcomes, grounded in a human rights-based approach that tackled deeply rooted structural/intersectional issues. UNFPA should build on COVID-19 lessons in designing its new plan, including measures to strengthen and accelerate efforts to end preventable maternal deaths and gender-based violence through the Spotlight Initiative and Supplies Partnership. The plan's results and resources framework should indicate common United Nations development system objectives, targets, outcomes and each organization's role and comparative advantages. Delegations encouraged UNFPA to play its part to accelerate United Nations reform and foster effective joint programmes. They called on Member States, in a position to do so, to increase contributions to the Fund's core funding base, including through the Funding Compact, to give UNFPA the agility to support countries, especially in crises. They encouraged UNFPA to pursue public-private partnerships as part of its larger innovation and resource mobilization efforts.

72. Board members said the strategic plan, 2022-2025, should continue to prioritize countries in special development situations, such as landlocked developing countries, least developed countries (LDCs), middle-income countries (MICs) and small island developing States (SIDS). The group welcomed the Fund's focus on multi-country offices, allocation of funds and programmatic work in SIDS, and detailed approach to indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in rural and urban contexts. They appreciated UNFPA inclusion of persons living with disabilities and those living with HIV and highlighted its role supporting countries dealing with low birth rates and ageing societies. They welcomed UNFPA efforts to strengthen institutional capacity to deliver social behavioural change communication for adolescents and young people. The Fund should use the new strategic plan to identify innovative ways to promote South-South and triangular cooperation. They encouraged UNFPA to continue to leverage digital transformation (telemedicine) to reach those furthest behind and underscored the continued importance of UNFPA disaggregated data/evidence and national capacity-building in identifying vulnerable populations.

73. A group of delegations stressed that the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, must be grounded in a human rights-based approach, results-focused and aligned with the Goals, prioritizing the most vulnerable and those who experience multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and violence. While continuing to strengthen comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, UNFPA should safeguard its global normative role. They encouraged UNFPA to build on the pandemic's lessons when developing its new strategic plan, including helping countries strengthen health-care systems toward achieving universal health coverage and last-mile delivery of health supplies. Its continued focus on leaving no one behind was critical to reaching the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, built on quality, disaggregated data. They expected UNFPA to bolster its humanitarian action in the new strategic plan, including its gender advisory role in acute crises, supporting preparedness and crisis response in protracted settings, and coordination on gender-based violence in crises.

74. Another group said the 2020 quadrennial review gave the United Nations development system the strategic direction to support achievement of the Goals when progress was at risk due to the pandemic. That included on climate, biodiversity, digital technologies, persons with disabilities, violence against women and girls, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, and youth. United Nations organizations were urged to collaborate in developing a strong monitoring framework, including evidence-based indicators individual organizations would

incorporate in their results frameworks. The organizations had to act in consolidating United Nations reform, ensuring full implementation of the management and accountability framework, increasing efficiencies through harmonized business operations, and aligning activities with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. They expected the organizations to mainstream climate/environment-responsive approaches, support countries in their Paris Agreement commitments, and reduce their environmental footprint. The organizations should work to create a socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable were met and no one was left behind. Building back better meant ensuring sustainable, inclusive, resilient recovery, including mainstreaming the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. They highlighted the importance of accelerating gender mainstreaming and gender equality expertise throughout the United Nations system, promoting girls' education and full realization of their human rights, through better coordination with humanitarian/peace/security entities and a reinforced sustainable development-peace nexus. The organizations should engage in early joint risk-informed analysis and planning and ensure a conflict-sensitive approach. That included strengthening resident/humanitarian coordinator leadership, key for United Nations impact in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

75. In response, the Executive Director said the UNFPA mandate to leave no one behind was at the heart of its strategic plan, 2022-2025. The plan would continue the Fund's work on the three transformative results using disaggregated data/evidence, in which UNFPA was investing and would share across regions, with civil society and governments. Such data fed into programme policy, planning, implementation, monitoring/reporting and helped strengthen national early warning systems. UNFPA analysed megatrends and interplay between demography, urbanization, population dynamics, gender, and climate, including scenario planning and forecasting, to make UNFPA more agile and flexible. The new plan would integrate UNFPA humanitarian-development-peace work in the monitoring and accountability framework and specific performance indicators so that in humanitarian settings no one was left behind. Programming innovations were creating ways to accelerate impactful progress at local level, through progressive thinking with private-sector partners and digital, data-based solutions.

76. UNFPA was ideally placed to minimize the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls through its partnerships to build resilience, especially through health-care systems. UNFPA would build on COVID-19 lessons to transform mindsets and make women and girls agents of change in decision-making. Localizing women's leadership was crucial, an effort in which UNFPA was an active partner in the Generation Equality Action Coalitions, including addressing the needs of countries in special development situations. The Fund prioritized systems-resilience and building adaptability, especially for countries facing disaster/climate-related crises, stepping up its services, presence, and funding in multi-country offices, especially for SIDS and, through its leadership in the United Nations system, defining a common narrative and approach. UNFPA was arranging consultations with national, regional, and subregional stakeholders to define and streamline system-wide policies and technical support to multi-country offices. The Fund was upgrading its capacity to support multi-country offices and foster greater South-South cooperation, upping its support to LDCs to spearhead delivery of essential services for COVID-19, and tackling gender-based violence through the Spotlight Initiative.

77. UNFPA welcomed the 2020 quadrennial review's strategic guidance and focus on better system-wide integration of policy, planning, programming, and implementation. UNFPA was at the forefront of United Nations reform, leading collective efforts to address efficiency gains and better business operations. The Fund remained committed to the resident coordinator system and cooperation frameworks

and was working with United Nations organizations devising the new system-wide monitoring and reporting framework.

78. Unrestricted resources allowed UNFPA to be agile and flexible in its pandemic response, including equitable distribution of essential services and medicines. UNFPA was working to garner resources to deliver on its ICPD mandate and the 2030 Agenda in full accountability and transparency. The Executive Director appealed to Member States to help UNFPA reach its goal of 150 core contributors and strengthen its ability to achieve the three transformative results. UNFPA was building its donor base, raising awareness, engaging partners, and enhancing visibility through better communication. It was crucial partners and individuals understood how UNFPA helped address their concerns and aspirations, knowing that investing in girls guaranteed a return on investment. The Fund was stepping up its engagement with the international financial institutions and regional banks to explore innovative financing for its mandate.

79. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) said UNFPA was addressing the rise of gender-based violence during the pandemic, including through its gender-based violence dashboard to ensure informed programming. At national level, the Fund continued to provide technical advice to authorities to mainstream gender-based violence in national COVID-19 response plans, both in development and humanitarian settings.

80. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said the 2020 quadrennial review was guiding the development of the new strategic plan and integrated budget, 2022-2025. Both were grounded in the principles of results-based management, pursuing collective results through expanded/new partnerships, prioritizing climate and environment, delivering better human resources management, exploring innovative resource mobilization approaches, and ensuring transparency and accountability, all through a human rights, gender, disability, and youth lens aimed at leaving no one behind.

VII. Evaluation

81. The Director, Evaluation Office, presented the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South and triangular cooperation. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided the management response to the report.

82. In the sole intervention, a delegation welcomed the recommendation that UNFPA establish centres of excellence on South-South and triangular cooperation and management's acceptance of that recommendation; such centres would be critically important to transfer knowledge, technologies, and expertise from North to South. The delegation asked how UNFPA planned to enhance cooperation between North and South for effective technology transfer; how existing mechanisms, such as the United Nations Technology Bank, could be used; how UNFPA encouraged the private sector to join; how UNFPA planned to share good practices and lessons during the pandemic to enhance crisis preparedness/response capacities among countries in the South; and how those lessons would be integrated in the next strategic plan.

83. In response, the Director, Policy and Strategy Division, assured delegations that UNFPA was working on South-South cooperation in line with the second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) framework and General-Assembly resolution [73/291](#). UNFPA centres of excellence were drivers of South-South cooperation that provided unique expertise and experience and central to UNFPA country programming. The centres engaged with private-sector partners. The Fund's recently established South-South cooperation unit was identifying knowledge,

experiences, and good practices, including on COVID-19, making them available to countries to ensure no one was left behind.

84. The Executive Board took note of the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South and triangular cooperation ([DP/FPA/2021/CRP.1](#)) and the management response to the evaluation ([DP/FPA/2021/CRP.2](#)).

VIII. Country programmes and related matters

85. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided an overview of 12 country programme documents and eight country programme extensions. In turn, the UNFPA regional directors for the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, East and Southern Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West and Central Africa elaborated on their respective regional perspectives.

86. Several Member States provided supportive statements to the country programmes.

87. The delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan requested that their statements be reflected in the official record of the first regular session 2021, as provided in the following links: (a) [statement](#) by Armenia; and (b) [statement](#) by Azerbaijan.

88. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Azerbaijan ([DP/FPA/CPD/AZE/5](#) and [Corr.1](#)), China ([DP/FPA/CPD/CHN/9](#)), Côte d'Ivoire ([DP/FPA/CPD/CIV/8](#)), Eswatini ([DP/FPA/CPD/SWZ/7](#)), Georgia ([DP/FPA/CPD/GEO/4](#)), North Macedonia ([DP/FPA/CPD/MKD/2](#) and [Corr.1](#)), Panama ([DP/FPA/CPD/PAN/4](#)), Somalia ([DP/FPA/CPD/SOM/4](#)), Tunisia ([DP/FPA/CPD/TUN/10](#)), Uganda ([DP/FPA/CPD/UGA/9](#)), Uruguay ([DP/FPA/CPD/URY/4](#)) and Uzbekistan ([DP/FPA/CPD/UZB/5](#)).

89. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bangladesh, Guinea Bissau, Maldives and Tanzania, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/2](#), and the first, six-month extension for Armenia, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/2.Add.1](#) (see also [DP/FPA/CPD/ARM/4/Corr.1](#)).

90. The Executive Board approved the second one-year extensions for Guatemala and Venezuela, and the fourth six-month extension for the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/2](#).

UNOPS segment

IX. United Nations Office for Project Services

Statement by the Executive Director

91. Delivering the statement on behalf of the Executive Director, the Director of Regional Portfolios said UNOPS had adapted quickly and at scale to the COVID-19 pandemic, mobilizing nearly \$900 million for its COVID-19 response and recovery projects. That included procuring and delivering medical supplies/equipment, expanding testing capacity, managing medical waste, and helping mitigate socioeconomic impacts. In 2021, UNOPS was developing its strategic plan, 2022-2025, building on lessons and successes of the previous plan, experiences addressing COVID-19, and the 2020 quadrennial review, together with partners. Throughout 2020 UNOPS experienced rising demand for services in emergency response,

prevention, and logistics and in reaching vulnerable communities in fragile settings – demonstrating the continued relevance of its unique demand-driven mandate.

92. UNOPS continued to strengthen its ability to champion quality infrastructure to address and adapt to climate change, protect societies with zero tolerance in health and safety, and deliver infrastructure that served everyone equally. In SIDS, UNOPS worked with governments and pursued partnerships that helped build national sustainable, resilient, inclusive infrastructure, aligned with the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. Given the size of global procurement expenditure, its percentage of global domestic product, and risk of corruption, public procurement offered an opportunity for development cooperation that UNOPS was championing. UNOPS was helping governments unlock that potential to tackle corruption, ensure fair competition, and build sustainable, resilient supply chains as part of national post-pandemic recovery. Those efforts helped countries achieve value for money and ensure public funding was available so countries could shift to low-carbon economies, implement national development priorities, and accelerate progress towards the Goals.

93. Gender equality remained a top corporate priority. In 2021, UNOPS was set to reach full workforce parity and aimed to achieve parity at all senior leadership levels during the strategic plan, 2022-2025, going beyond United Nations system-wide targets, irrespective of personnel categories and contract modalities. Equally important was UNOPS focus on managing assets responsibly. UNOPS was working with independent experts to align its minimum operational reserves to its existing organizational profile. Its shift to an automated, centralized treasury and cash management system enhanced financial planning and ensured transparency of operations and better management of financial risks. UNOPS remained committed to gender mainstreaming, ensuring infrastructure responded to women's needs, involving women in infrastructure projects, making sure procurement projects continued to benefit women and other underrepresented groups. UNOPS continued to maintain low average fees for partners, and its COVID-19 response showed that stronger partnerships led to more effective responses.

94. Across the Board, delegations reiterated their support for UNOPS unique self-financing, demand-driven business model; mandate in climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable procurement, and project management; and ability to address unexpected challenges such as COVID-19 through innovation. They commended UNOPS agile, quick response to COVID-19, procuring and delivering medical supplies, expanding testing capacity, rolling out vaccination campaigns, together with United Nations organizations. Its COVID-19 response underscored UNOPS ideal position in reaching the unreachable in remote areas and fragile settings. They supported UNOPS private sector collaboration and public-private partnerships as drivers for Goals implementation. They encouraged UNOPS to continue to share its sustainable practices through the Global Reporting Initiative and work with governments to make them more transparent. They welcomed the continued rise in demand for UNOPS services and sought details on UNOPS efforts to meet that rise, including leveraging digital infrastructure and building national capacity, especially in LDCs. They expected the strategic plan, 2022-2025, to reflect and integrate lessons of the existing strategic plan and COVID-19 pandemic.

95. Board members welcomed UNOPS successes in gender mainstreaming and equality, integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis response, and gender lens in financing projects. They appreciated UNOPS capacity to quickly respond in crises and scale up interventions. They welcomed UNOPS projects digitalizing educational programmes to ensure children remained engaged in public school systems throughout the pandemic and supported UNOPS efforts to ensure equal opportunity for women and women-owned businesses. They sought details on

UNOPS engagement with MICs and potential benefits for global service delivery through South-South cooperation. They welcomed UNOPS use of procurement to deliver HIV test kits to health services and work to construct a midwifery training centre. Noting UNOPS business volume with United Nations organizations was stagnant while demand for its services increased with partners, they encouraged UNOPS to identify untapped potential for efficiency gains, notably in United Nations procurement.

96. A group of delegations from the Pacific SIDS welcomed early positive signs of increasing cooperation between SIDS and UNOPS, especially in resilient infrastructure development and sustainability and capacity-building of national procurement systems and the health sector. They welcomed UNOPS response to COVID-19 and procuring medical supplies and appreciated its emergency tuberculosis project to support early diagnosis and treatment, helping accelerate progress towards Goal 3. They welcomed UNOPS efforts to incorporate national capacity-building and community engagement during infrastructure development to strengthen institutions and local expertise. They commended UNOPS increased presence in SIDS, including work on climate-resilient housing.

97. Another group, recognizing the pandemic's impact on development gains, stressed the need for fresh thinking, better innovation, and new partnerships, particularly with the private sector. They encouraged UNOPS to be innovative in its strategic plan, 2022-2025, and continue to focus on implementation for impact. They commended UNOPS efforts to form new and build on long-standing partnerships and enhance public-private partnerships to foster recovery, renewal, and resilience through the sustainable infrastructure impact investment initiative (S3I). The group expected the pandemic's lessons and the Global Innovation Centre to figure in the new strategic plan. They welcomed the improved gender balance among personnel, strengthened integration of gender equality in projects, and efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, and encouraged a speak-up culture. They expected the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy to be applied across UNOPS operations.

98. In response, the Director, Regional Portfolios said to meet rising demand UNOPS focused on strengthening in-house capacities, including continued tailored learning, a stronger portfolio of rosters/retainers, and larger talent benches. In parallel, UNOPS prioritized building national capacities in LDCs through technical assistance and advisory services to ensure national programme implementation through the use of national/local small and medium enterprises, exposing them to international standards and best practices. Despite price increases and extraction of staff, UNOPS delivered uninterrupted services in LDCs throughout the pandemic. Structurally, UNOPS digital transformation acted as a critical enabler driving greater effectiveness and efficiency in supporting partners and national capacity-building. In 2020 UNOPS delivered more than 50 per cent of its projects in MICs. That included UNOPS South-South cooperation work to build, promote and share social security best practices throughout the Latin America and Caribbean region. Internally, UNOPS was making steady progress achieving gender parity, growing from a 39 to 46 per cent women's workforce in two years.

99. The Director, Implementation Practices and Standards said an example of UNOPS capacity-building at country level was its evidence-based infrastructure initiative. The approach underpinned UNOPS thought leadership and operational engagement with governments, helping them make informed decisions and ensure implementation and maximum impact throughout infrastructure lifecycle. It included ensuring lifecycle investments were adequate and had maximum impact while making better use of existing national resources. Additionally, UNOPS sustainable infrastructure financing tool helped countries identify financing options. UNOPS

worked hand-in-hand with governments, transferring knowledge and expertise and helping restructure and set up national infrastructure planning and delivery teams. UNOPS sustainable procurement expertise was likewise important in helping governments diversify and strengthen food system and supply chain resilience. Such efforts complemented UNOPS work helping governments fight corruption, promote transparency, and open up effective competition, freeing up public funds for development. On gender mainstreaming, UNOPS followed a five-track approach: leadership, policy and process, resources and capacity building, knowledge sharing, and monitoring/reporting. UNOPS used a set of tools in each track to integrate gender in its sustainability and resilience portfolio. UNOPS worked downstream to ensure safeguarding in procurement through its Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement, a vendor assessment, inspection, and corrective action-planning programme. It ensured UNOPS vendors operated responsibly, aligned with highest integrity standards, focused on human rights, labour standards, equal opportunity, code of conduct, health, safety, quality management and environmental management.

100. The Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration said digitalization would feature prominently in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, and inform UNOPS engagement with United Nations organizations. In 2020, UNOPS automated its treasury management system, enabling most payments to be performed through its Shared Service Centre in Bangkok. UNOPS leveraged its participation in the World Bank Reserve Advisory and Management Partnership to obtain advice and best practices on selecting a treasury management system. Digitization allowed UNOPS to conduct online training for the treasury management system roll-out to 700 personnel globally in 2020. UNOPS digital transformation was an important way to channel the pandemic's lessons into the strategic plan, 2022-2025, including analysis of long-term impacts on delivery of a remote workforce and how UNOPS should maintain and scale up delivery.

101. The Executive Board took note of the statement by the UNOPS Executive Director.

X. Other matters

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

102. The Chairperson of the Staff Council updated the Board on challenges staff faced navigating the stress of working during the COVID-19 pandemic, including difficulties working remotely and its psychosocial effects, both at headquarters and country level.

103. A group of delegations, recognizing the pandemic's impact on staff, stressed it was the organizations' responsibility to ensure a healthy work environment that considered individuals' personal circumstances, responded to domestic violence, and prevented sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. They appreciated management's steps to meet staff needs and strengthen commitments and encouraged UNDP and UNFPA to maintain dialogue with staff and the Staff Council. They urged the organizations throughout the pandemic to pursue United Nations reform, ensuring staff were involved in a transparent, inclusive manner. Staff issues would remain a priority for Member States; the reform's goal was to make the organizations efficient and effective in delivering the 2030 Agenda – only possible if staff worked in a fulfilling, safe environment.

104. A delegation said the Staff Council's work showed the need for robust structures and lines of communications between staff and management. It stressed the need to

promote inclusivity and a human rights-based approach to remote work, address discrimination, and foster decent work.

105. In response, the Director of Human Resources, UNFPA, commended the Staff Council for its commitment to staff during the pandemic. Demands on staff had increased in part due to COVID-19's impact on the Fund's mandate and women and girls globally. UNFPA had set up interdivisional working groups to guide staff and trained managers to manage working remotely. UNFPA worked with United Nations organizations through human resources networks, interagency groups, and the Staff Council to support staff and personnel. In 2019-2020, the Staff Council engaged with national-level staff associations, boosting the Fund's global staff networks and connections across the United Nations system. Especially notable was the Fund's commitment to duty-of-care, which it strengthened in 2020 through the employee assistance programme and introduction of duty-of-care and regional counselling resources. The Fund created open safe spaces for staff to share experiences, collectively helping establish procedures and frameworks that supported a diverse, inclusive workplace.

106. The Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration, UNOPS, welcomed the Staff Council's constructive engagement and commended UNOPS staff's commitment, resilience, and adaptability. UNOPS had worked to ensure regular communication, clear guidance, and resources for staff, including through mental health and well-being counselling and stress management. UNOPS made robust efforts to support management and staff and foster a productive, inclusive work environment.

107. The Director, Office of Human Resources, UNDP, said UNDP provided staff counselling and access to telehealth, regardless of contractual status, and applied rules/procedures enabling staff to deliver. The Administrator commissioned a task force that presented several recommendations being considered by senior leadership to address diversity-related issues. Central to those efforts was the UNDP People for 2030 strategy, ensuring UNDP maximized its capacity to deliver by attracting and retaining top-notch diverse talent.

108. In response, the Chairperson said the council sought to reflect lessons and determine how to improve conditions. That included reconciling narratives across organizations, so they better reflected staff concerns and expectations, especially at country level, through management, the Staff Council, and local staff associations. The council was keen to use lessons to improve dialogue to promote and foster greater joint responsibility and accountability.

Part two
Annual session 2021

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 7 to 11 June 2021**

I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session 2021 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 7 to 11 June 2021.
2. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its annual session 2021 (DP/2021/L.2) and approved the report of the first regular session 2021 (DP/2021/12).
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the annual session 2021 appeared in document DP/2021/27, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2021/13 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2021:

Second regular session 2021: 30 August to 3 September 2021.

Statement by the President of the Board

5. The President of the Board said 2021 was a critical year when United Nations organizations were developing new strategic plans, 2022-2025, as they continued to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The organizations needed to build on work to date, factoring in the pandemic's impact and creatively realign to meet new challenges, needs and expectations while operating with limited financial resources. The Bureau's objective was to provide room for strategic, inclusive, transparent and fruitful consultations and to cooperate and coordinate with other executive boards. The joint meeting demonstrated how the organizations were implementing the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system 2020 (A/RES/75/233) and United Nations reform amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Such cooperation needed further strengthening, including via joint decision-making on issues of common interest. The COVID-19 pandemic was a game changer and with less than 10 years remaining to 2030, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals remained the top priority.

Joint segment

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

6. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management), the Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, and the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, updated the Board, using country examples, on their collective and individual organizational efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system within the context of the quadrennial review 2020.
7. Overall, delegations underscored the pandemic's disproportionate impact on developing countries and special role of the United Nations development system in addressing the socioeconomic and health impacts, including ensuring vaccination access and distribution through greater coordination, coherence, flexibility, and a strengthened resident coordinator system.
8. A group of delegations stressed the need to implement the 2020 quadrennial review and reflect its principles in the strategic plans, 2022-2025. They commended

the organizations' collective response to the pandemic's socioeconomic and health impacts and stressed the United Nations system's role in promoting sustainable, inclusive recovery, including through climate and biodiversity preservation. COVID-19 recovery was an opportunity to make the global economy more resilient, inclusive, sustainable. The United Nations system should develop environment-responsive, human rights-based, gender-responsive approaches in their strategic plans and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction commitments. Mainstreaming climate and environment in development cooperation was an opportunity to showcase an integrated United Nations at country level.

9. Other delegations said the repositioned United Nations development system, through the independent, empowered resident coordinator system, was a tool for tailoring the system-wide response to country-specific needs, driving rapid, resilient, inclusive global recovery. It was further stressed that mutual accountability between resident coordinators and United Nations organizations should be balanced, ensuring effective delivery. Harmonizing the integrated results and resources frameworks, where appropriate, remained crucial, as did strengthening core resources and designing innovative business models. Coordination costs should not affect programme resources, a situation the resident coordinator system review should address. Welcoming UNDP technical leadership in socioeconomic response plans, delegations sought details on plans to achieve objectives amid rising resource constraints. They encouraged the organizations to explore cost-saving options and sought examples of how United Nations reform helped free up resources, avoid duplication, and contribute to 2030 Agenda implementation.

10. In response, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said UNFPA was aligning its new strategic plan with the 2020 quadrennial review, working to mainstream human rights and gender equality, and strengthen efforts to address climate and biodiversity aspects in its mandate, integrating them as crosscutting themes in its strategic plan, 2022-2025. At country level, UNFPA focused on bolstering national capacities through data research and policy advice so national responses to climate and biodiversity preservation reflected their impact on women's sexual and reproductive health and promotion of gender equality. Reducing the Fund's climate footprint at country level was integral to its approach to climate change. All UNFPA programmes were in line with UNSDCFs and national priorities, as reflected in common results reporting.

11. The Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, said the repositioning exercise helped advance United Nations coherence at country level. Best practices showcased the collective action and incentives that rallied United Nations entities around common goals, rooted in mutual accountability and inclusive leadership under resident coordinators. UNDP was leading preparations for the twenty-sixth United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021, guiding nationally determined contributions in 118 countries and integrating climate/biodiversity in national planning/budgets. Internally, UNDP was reducing its footprint through its Greening the Blue initiative. On business operations, the United Nations development system had seen a 57 per cent increase in efficiency gains in 2019-2020, and UNDP had redirected \$355 million of cost-savings from internal transformations into programming in 2018-2020. UNDP supported interagency efforts through the Business and Innovation Group.

12. The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, said as a demand-driven, largely non-resident organization, UNOPS worked through country teams and multi-country offices, following events at country level and stepping in as needed. UNOPS welcomed the Board's integrated approach in the run-up to adopting

the strategic plans, 2022-2025, allowing for discussions on common issues to emerge. Focusing on the resident coordinator system and UNSDCF development had helped to centre the organizations' work at country and local levels and better reflected country priorities in the new strategic plans. This shift had prompted UNOPS to seek greater convergence with system-wide efforts, especially at country level.

13. The Executive Board took note 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

14. The Director, Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), UNDP, presented the annual report of OAI on internal audit and investigations activities in 2020 ([DP/2021/14](#)); the Director, Bureau of Management, UNDP, provided the management response. The Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAI), UNFPA, presented the report of OAI on internal audit and investigation activities in 2020 ([DP/FPA/2021/6](#) and annexes), the opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the UNFPA framework of governance, risk management and control ([DP/FPA/2021/6/Add.1](#)), and the annual report of the Oversight Advisory Committee ([DP/FPA/2021/6/Add.2](#)). The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) presented the management response ([DP/FPA/2021/CRP.6](#)). The Director, Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG), UNOPS, presented the annual report on internal audit and investigations activities in 2020 ([DP/OPS/2021/](#)); the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, provided the management response.

UNDP

15. A group of delegations, pleased with harmonization efforts, said audit and investigation reporting should provide the Board with descriptions of work and insights/analysis on wider implications of audit and investigation findings. They looked forward to the results of the audit working group and details of what to expect going forward. They requested information on UNDP vertical fund portfolios and audits – noting that the Green Climate Fund (GEF) audit was complete, the review by the financial advisory firm, BDO, of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) portfolio was underway, and regular audits of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria were taking place – which helped to identify UNDP strengths and weaknesses in implementing projects financed through vertical funds. They sought clarity on whether there would be changes to the macro approach to vertical fund management given recurrent audit issues.

16. Other delegations commended UNDP for increased implementation rates despite the pandemic and for not having long-outstanding recommendations for the first time in 10 years. Given recurrent areas of concern – including programme/project management, procurement, financial management, harmonized approach to cash transfers compliance, governance, human resources, and travel management – UNDP was encouraged to continue to address weaknesses and underlying issues. Noting the 44 per cent decrease in new allegations and low level of financial loss due to fraud, they sought details on the dynamics behind the almost halving of fraud allegations in 2020. They encouraged UNDP to work with other United Nations organizations to harmonize audit and investigation definitions/reporting. A delegation requested clarity on UNDP actions to address the reported insufficient global approach to support country offices, given donor concerns on UNDP oversight of and participation in GEF projects.

UNFPA

17. Delegations appreciated OAIS oversight work and commended UNFPA for improvements in in-country supply chain management, especially in the COVID-19 context. There was support for continued strengthening of procurement policies and procedures at local level, and recognition of progress implementing audit recommendations compared to previous years. UNFPA was urged to address the continuous accumulation of outstanding investigations and bolster its commitment to zero tolerance on corruption through adequate financial and personnel resources. While additional posts in the audit function were welcomed, it was noted they might be insufficient to address the growing, ever more complex investigation caseload. There was concern that, of the audits finalized in 2020, 74 per cent were rated as 'needing major improvement'. None were rated to be 'effective'. Given the situation's unsustainability, there was a request for management's view of measures needed to bring rapid, positive change.

UNOPS

18. UNOPS was commended for taking a vigorous victim-centred approach to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Details were sought on steps it was taking to ensure a more robust, effective approach to vendor compliance in its procurement rules and procedures.

19. In response, the Director, Bureau of Management, UNDP, said audits related to the UNDP vertical fund portfolio had contributed to strengthening programme management/delivery. UNDP remained committed to addressing audit recommendations in a timely manner and had implemented 70 per cent of GEF-related audit recommendations. The remainder were expected on time before end 2021. Examples included the new anti-money laundering policy, measures to counter financing of terrorism, new standard operating procedures for vertical fund programming, and new requirements for country-level follow-up actions for risk assessments. UNDP was setting up systems, such as the new enterprise risk planning (ERP), to address recurring areas of concern.

20. The Director, OAI, UNDP, reiterated UNDP commitment to interagency harmonization while highlighting that harmonizing audit reporting across organizations with different governance structures was challenging. The audit offices were working to streamline their work and expand their ability to generate insights. Regarding GEF, OAI welcomed how UNDP management addressed audit-identified risks. Despite OAI concerns, roughly 70 per cent of recommendations had been implemented. The main challenge was making the changes sustainable in the UNDP portfolio. Oversight of implementing partners constituted an opportunity to rethink UNDP institutional oversight architecture to make it robust, sustainable and reliable. Financial loss varied year to year. In 2019, it was significant. That was not the case in 2020 and 2021 would be different. UNDP was able to address allegations of financial misconduct as they arose. OAI conducted tests of GEF-funded projects through country office audits, which offered broader understanding of issues identified in the GEF portfolio.

21. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) underlined the Fund's commitment to harmonized interagency processes and close monitoring of UNFPA implementation of audit recommendations through the Audit Monitoring Committee. The new ERP system would help monitor procurement processes. UNFPA was working to address the accumulation of outstanding investigations by increasing resources in the next integrated budget, despite the need for a prudent budget approach. That included more resources for the OAIS investigative function,

including three additional posts. UNFPA remained committed to zero tolerance for fraud and corruption.

22. The Director, OAI, UNFPA, complemented the statement on harmonization of the internal audit function by OAI Director, UNDP. For the investigation function, the funds and programmes were working to harmonize definitions and find common ground to the extent possible, despite different legal frameworks. Regarding the nine audits it concluded in 2020, OAI focused on high-risk country offices, which, given their profile, were more prone to issues. Of the 166 auditable business units, OAI conducted a full audit of six country offices. Further, OAI concluded audits of two regions using the remote audit modality (focusing on transactions), each report covering 20-25 country and regional offices, and the financial audit of one major programme in one country. The new ERP system would foster easier, more comprehensive access to information, allowing better identification of issues. She recalled that the overall opinion on the UNFPA governance, risk management and control framework remained 'some improvement needed'. OAI based its opinion taking a broad approach, starting with work it performed, including audits concluded in 2020, and those controls the robustness of which OAI could test.

23. The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, said UNOPS had set up stronger preventive measures and stepped up its responses to compliance and procurement fraud. IAIG was working with teams globally to detect fraud or collusion in procurement. There had been a significant rise in identification of potential cases and processing of vendors through UNOPS vendor review committees. Further, management and operations' emphasis on risks helped focus on areas of vendor fraud and corrupt practices in a manner relevant to markets where UNOPS was sourcing goods and services. UNOPS regularly updated its procurement manual to reflect such processes, making them more effective and efficient. UNOPS had strengthened its due diligence mechanisms as part of its selection processes, helping to identify problems early on.

24. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/11 on internal audit and investigation: reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses.

IV. Ethics

25. The Director, UNDP Ethics Office, the Director, UNFPA Ethics Office, and the Director, UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office presented their respective reports: the activities of the UNDP Ethics Office in 2020 ([DP/2021/15](#)), the UNFPA report of the Ethics Office 2020 ([DP/FPA/2021/7](#)), and the activities of the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in 2020 ([DP/OPS/2021/3](#)). These were followed by the management responses delivered by the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, the Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, and the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS.

26. In two interventions, delegations commended UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for their valuable contributions to promoting and fostering a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability and urged the ethics offices and management to take steps to ensure that culture continued to grow and flourish. They recognized the increased requests for advisory services in UNFPA and UNDP as a positive sign and sought information on how the three ethics offices were seeking to measure such services, including around operational risks and other types of activities.

UNDP

27. The UNDP Ethics Office was commended for its participation in the UNDP Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the UNDP Administrator for establishing the UNDP Team on Racism and Discrimination. Clarity was sought on whether the Office for Human Resources had responded to the UNDP request regarding UNDP-issued contract holders and authorities on dispute resolution, and whether the Ethics Office received GEF-related complaints in 2020. Noting that UNDP had no financial disclosure programme verification in 2020, a delegation sought clarity as to why that was the case and what plans UNDP had to resume the exercise in 2021.

UNFPA

28. Delegations commended UNFPA for the high number of staff trained in 2020 despite COVID-19 and welcomed the number of allegations of retaliation remained stable. They appreciated UNFPA efforts to partner and conduct training/outreach with United Nations organizations and sought information on where the ethics offices saw opportunities for greater collaboration, to what extent collaboration was taking place, what the challenges and benefits were, particularly in outreach, awareness-raising and training at country level, and who were the hardest to reach.

UNOPS

29. Delegations commended UNOPS for supporting a grassroots programme to celebrate diversity at UNOPS and address important questions arising from global movements against discrimination. They recognized the external independent review of UNOPS protection against retaliation and supported its conclusions and sought details on who conducted the review.

30. In response, the Director, UNDP Ethics Office, said the office had received no specific GEF-related retaliation complaints, though an individual who had worked on GEF-related projects had followed up on a particular matter indirectly related to GEF. He confirmed that in 2021 the office would undertake the financial disclosure verification exercise, which it had suspended in 2020 during the pandemic. In addition, it had instituted a follow-up exercise for every filer who had indicated having no assets in excess of \$10,000. And despite challenges in their differing approaches/policies, the office would continue to pursue ever greater harmonization with the ethics offices of the other United Nations organizations.

31. The Director, UNFPA Ethics Office, said UNFPA partnered with United Nations organizations, including the Secretariat. UNFPA had incorporated and updated the content of the United Nations Ethics Office online learning programmes; it was collaborating on outreach materials and benefitted from the review of financial disclosure programmes. The collocation of United Nations offices at country level offered an opportunity for greater collaboration for in-country training. As local staff members were hardest to reach, UNFPA sought to reach them through its online presence, a top priority going forward.

32. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said the Fund supported interagency coordination of training and affirmed the increased number of cases was a positive sign, reflecting greater trust among staff in Ethics Office tools.

33. The Director, UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office, said the external independent review was conducted by the international law firm Allen & Overy on a pro bono basis. The office fully supported collaboration among the organizations' ethics offices to share experiences and harmonize practices. She said case numbers did not provide a clear picture of the office's workload since they did not take into

account time-intensive activities. The balance of work could be ascertained by noting the emphasis placed on certain activities in the annual report on ethics. The office was exploring ways to present such data in the future.

34. The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, said a major challenge was reaching beyond United Nations organizations to implementing partners and contractors. This was especially of concern regarding sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. To address this challenge, UNOPS had put together a task force that tackled legal, ethics, human resources and investigations together.

35. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/12 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS.

V. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

36. The Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, the Director, Bureau of Management, UNDP, and the General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, provided oral updates on their organizations' protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including within the COVID-19 pandemic context.

37. A cross-regional group commended UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for their commitment to promoting a safe working environment for staff, tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and assisting vulnerable populations during the pandemic. The group pointed to four areas for improvement.

- (a) *Addressing root causes and raising awareness.* They welcomed investments in staff capacity-building and stressed the need to build awareness of power differentials and inequalities between victims and perpetrators. Local communities had to become aware of their rights, mechanisms for reporting complaints, and support available to survivors, a goal that outreach and country-level plans should reflect.
- (b) *Mitigating risk.* They recognized staff efforts to deliver during the pandemic and called for robust processes and strategies to identify, prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment risks, including harmonizing tools to assess implementing partners' capacity and working with relevant stakeholders.
- (c) *Ensuring country-level response and interagency collaboration.* They recognized efforts to embed safeguards in operations and appreciated UNFPA work as the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) champion to build a roster of trained experts for deployment to humanitarian and development settings. They looked forward to the UNFPA review of the humanitarian system response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.
- (d) *Supporting survivors and reporting.* They commended the commitment to a survivor-centred approach prioritizing rights and needs and strengthening community-based reporting mechanisms, stressing the role of monitoring and evaluation. It was important to ensure allegations were reported through the Secretary-General's online mechanism and provide prompt, confidential reporting to Member States on the status of allegations and actions taken to address them.

38. A delegation called for a redoubling of prevention, reporting and accountability as part of the pandemic response. Risk analysis and mitigation deserved more attention. The organizations needed to strengthen prevention/response policies and

follow-up of reported incidents. Tools introduced to prevent rehiring staff perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment were welcome, as was increased transparency in reporting allegations and facilitating accountability at national level. But greater oversight and accountability were needed across humanitarian and development programmes and headquarters. Experiences from the Democratic Republic of Congo and UNDP and UNOPS Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessments could help address systems-level change.

39. In response, the Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, said the Fund attached great importance to addressing root causes of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment through practical initiatives, including management training and the external IASC review. On risk mitigation, UNFPA had operationalized the common implementing partner assessment tool and was leading an interagency pilot in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to harmonize assessments for shared partners. Internally, UNFPA pursued culture change and ever-greater inclusivity and integrity while working to ensure sufficient funding and human resources to meet the challenge.

40. The Director, Bureau of Management, UNDP, said UNDP was working on awareness-building, focal point training, and power differential dynamics. It had a comprehensive programme and action plan for culture change and worked via its gender-based violence programme to address root causes of harassment, including collaboration with humanitarian organizations. Internally, UNDP had a comprehensive diversity and inclusion programme. It leveraged existing institutional budget funding, covering internal work and investigations, and programme budget funding, including gender-based violence mechanisms and legal support through rule of law programmes.

41. The General Counsel and Director, New York Liaison Office, UNOPS, said UNOPS pursued a top-down approach to culture change, beginning with the Executive Director as champion of its speak-up campaign. Its change agenda permeated UNOPS systems, competency framework and staff assessments, which channelled into its leadership programme. UNOPS had a centralized reporting network for allegations led by IAIG who were trained to meet the Secretary-General's criteria. IAIG worked with United Nations organizations to deliver interagency training of focal points to ensure timely reporting, including at country level. UNOPS was working to expand resources in this area, hiring senior staff to respond to grievances/investigations and improve processes, grounded in a victim-centred approach.

42. The Executive Board took note of the update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

UNDP segment

VI. Interactive dialogue with the UNDP Administrator and annual report

43. In his statement ([available on the Executive Board website](#)), the Administrator, UNDP, said global human development had tumbled backwards for the first time in thirty years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite an effective vaccine, COVID-19 variants and surges demonstrated the pandemic continued to be a development emergency, while vaccine inequity was creating a new gulf between wealthy and poor. As the pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts expanded, local and global actors

collaborated in an unprecedented way. The United Nations system helped to reorganize global supply chains, dismantle barriers to getting government services online, protect jobs, keep people out of poverty, and race to find a vaccine. The Administrator addressed two main topics: UNDP performance against the current Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, including progress in tackling COVID-19, and what to expect in the new strategic plan, 2022-2025.

44. First, the Administrator said progress against the strategic plan, 2018-2021, though slowed, was still on track. UNDP quickly moved to repurpose core and non-core resources, enabling country offices to take swift action. Some original plans, however, were postponed or adjusted as government priorities shifted to crisis mitigation. UNDP continued to make progress on integrated support to pursue the Goals, agile financing, organizational learning, accountability and transparency. The Goals had compelled UNDP to enhance its ability to solve large, systemic challenges, working through a repositioned United Nations development system, as it launched the COVID-19 Data Futures Platform, delivered customized Sustainable Development Goals integration support, promoted finance for the Goals, fostered mechanisms to address debt, and helped countries develop integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs).

45. Second, with a balanced budget for the fourth consecutive year, increased productivity, and reduced costs, UNDP continued to do more with less. But to meet countries' needs and challenges going forward, agile financing would be crucial, especially given current UNDP dependency on highly earmarked resources. Without sufficient, flexible, predictable financing, UNDP would increasingly struggle to deliver on Member States ambitions, ensure a safe, inclusive working environment, and meet the highest standards of oversight and accountability.

46. Third, UNDP was committed to constant learning, change and renewal – central to *#NextGenUNDP*. The organization was stepping up its performance on social protection, its gender work was strong and growing, while it was taking action to promote women's leadership in conflict zones. Transparency and accountability were at the heart of its work, as testified in the 2020 Aid Transparency Index rating as the most transparent United Nations organization as well as its fifteenth consecutive unqualified audit opinion in 2019.

47. Within the reshaped United Nations development system, UNDP would scale up and accelerate progress toward the Goals. Its ambition was to help millions escape multidimensional poverty, support access to clean energy by investing in distributed renewable energy, and promote investment of public expenditure and private capital in the Goals. The new strategic plan, 2022-2025, would support countries in three major directions of change focused on poverty eradication: (a) structural transformation (transition to green inclusive, digital economies and societies); (b) leaving no one behind (a rights-based approach centred on human agency and development); and (c) building resilience (strengthening systems to respond to different risks).

48. UNDP would use integrated solutions that addressed systems-as-a-whole and built institutional resilience and dynamic capabilities, as it concentrated on its six signature solutions through three accelerators: strategic innovation, digitalization, and development financing. To bolster its capacities, UNDP would invest in six areas in its business model: people, knowledge, risk management, funding (a new funding model), operational excellence, and impact measurement. Those investments would generate the country office of the future. Partnerships, especially through the United Nations development system, would be integral to those efforts.

49. A group of delegations said reform was an opportunity to make the United Nations fit-for-purpose to deliver solutions to programme countries to achieve the

2030 Agenda. UNDP had shown technology and innovation were key and, in implementing the 2020 quadrennial review, UNDP should build on lessons from its socioeconomic response to the pandemic. UNDP was encouraged to continue to align planning/programming with United Nations organizations in consultation with Governments to respond to country needs. Results frameworks/budgets should describe common objectives, targets and outcomes, respecting each organization's mandates. Cross-pillar coherence and coordination remained the basic principles and avoiding diversion of resources from development. UNDP should focus on: (a) reversing the rising trend of poverty and hunger; (b) ensuring affordable and reliable COVID-19 vaccines for everyone, everywhere; (c) tackling adverse impacts of climate change, especially for adaptation and resilience building; (d) bridging the digital divide; and (e) investing in gender equality, children and youth.

50. A second group said eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions was an indispensable requirement for sustainable development that demanded cross-cutting approaches espoused in the 2030 Agenda. UNDP had a crucial role helping countries build back better and overcome the socioeconomic challenges the pandemic had worsened. The new strategic plan, 2022-2025, should refine that role in a renewed multilateralism, recognizing national ownership, the UNDP integrator role, and normative and operational responsibilities, underpinned by strong oversight, accountability and transparency. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) should receive the support and capacities to perform its normative and coordination functions. Given ongoing imbalance between core and non-core resources, UNDP should work to meet official development assistance (ODA) commitments and pursue predictability and availability of core resources. Support to domestic mobilization of resources, when requested by programme countries, had to be additional to, not a replacement for, efforts requested in the 2020 quadrennial review to ensure funding quantity and quality.

51. The third group recognized UNDP agility in crises to mobilize financing, enact digital transformation, and utilize its accelerator labs to bolster initiatives. They recognized the breadth of UNDP operations across the three pillars and six signature solutions to make systemic changes and structural transformations to help countries achieve the Goals. UNDP commitment to climate action was robust, forward-looking and its unique support and leadership for accountable, inclusive, democratic governance continued to be core. Noting the stronger UNDP ability to integrate gender perspectives, more attention to women's leadership in crisis settings was needed. UNDP was encouraged to increase analysis in annual reporting, including on development trends and its contribution to change. In the new strategic plan, UNDP was urged to: (a) strengthen its partnerships in humanitarian-development-peace settings through joint analysis/planning for collective outcomes; (b) respond to areas in 2020 internal evaluations; and (c) pursue its integrator role and transformation to deliver on the Goals.

52. In individual interventions, UNDP was encouraged to pursue its transformation by linking its operational portfolio with whole-of-government policy advice, making it more responsive to country needs. UNDP assistance in transforming public services, maintaining business continuity through digitalization, and promoting equitable, sustainable vaccine roll-out were timely and valuable. Delegations stressed that non-discriminatory access to the COVID-19 vaccines was a human right and countries subjected to sanctions merited special attention. COVID-19 recovery efforts should prioritize challenges on the ground rather than country categorizations, staying focused on achieving the Goals, including promoting universal and equal access to health care and women's participation. Continued UNDP partnerships with the international financial institutions was key to promote the INFFs. The proposed 'SDG Push' initiative was a positive step, one UNDP should pursue to focus on the most

vulnerable, especially in least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and conflict-affected countries.

53. In response, the Administrator said the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, would unify the various priorities of the 2020 quadrennial review. UNDP was collaborating with UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in designing IRRFs and reviewing the broader results architecture, out of which had emerged a new alignment among the organizations and joint priority setting rooted in comparative strengths. UNDP would continue globally to be a strong advocate not only for the Goals but to help countries leverage opportunities to achieve them. As a staunch supporter of multilateralism, UNDP advocated for early action through the international community in response to emergencies, including COVID-19, for which the resources to solve the vaccine distribution issue were available, including by rethinking debt. UNDP was committed to reform, the resident coordinator review process, and refining accountability, complementarity and coordination through the revamped resident coordinator system.

54. In its pursuit of ever greater effectiveness in climate action, governance and gender equality, UNDP culled the lessons of internal evaluations and looked outward to innovation and institutional reimagination. In its work, UNDP acted both as leader and amplifier of the United Nations system response to different challenges, working as the backbone and a shortcut for partners to access expertise. Governance was foremost about helping countries address the challenges of faltering social contracts, rule of law, political unrest and underlying issues of inequality and the right to development. It was the foundation for building consensus and identifying policy priorities, grounded in the norms and values Member States had endorsed. Anti-corruption initiatives, such as the UNDP anti-money laundering policy, were part of work the Board had requested, though the investment implications were sometimes beyond the UNDP business model's capacity to report and be held accountable. UNDP was reviewing its business model to address such challenges and would implement its management action plan with new policies, built on independent audits, to ensure effective, innovative anti-corruption work.

55. During the pandemic, UNDP worked with UNOSSC leading as a South-South cooperation broker helping countries share effective responses. UNDP was committed to tackling the special situation of LDCs and SIDS through its SIDS offer and the multidimensional vulnerability index and its connection to graduation. This work also addressed the concerns of middle-income countries and the rethinking of country categorizations. UNDP climate action likewise sought to help countries meet their energy needs and the world community to decarbonize the global economy through integrated biodiversity, nature solutions. UNDP promoted digitalization and built digital ecosystems that helped transform economies to reap the benefits of a whole-of-government approach. Gender would remain a distinct signature solution vital to all areas of UNDP work, along with climate and digitalization. UNDP was reviewing its gender strategy to foster more impactful programming and advance gender parity internally. It was actively tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and systemic racism through programming and corporately.

56. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/4 on the cumulative review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and annual report of the Administrator for 2020.

VII. Gender equality at UNDP

57. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, opened the item and the Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, presented the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender strategy, 2018-2021 (DP/2021/17).

58. A group of delegations commended UNDP for its commitment to and performance on gender equality and women's empowerment. They welcomed the annual report's country-level results and encouraged UNDP to analyse lessons/achievements to inform the direction of the new gender equality strategy. The new strategy should address root causes of gender inequality, capturing lessons from evaluations of UNDP work. They commended work to identify the role of social norms and how they lead to stagnation towards gender equality. UNDP was encouraged to match those findings with transformative actions that sought to change structures and address power dynamics, including discrimination faced by girls and women with disabilities. UNDP was encouraged to continue to partner within and beyond the United Nations system, including women's rights organizations, to better address the needs of populations in countries. They welcomed the UNDP–UN-Women Global Gender Response Tracker and called for its lessons to be shared to help shape better, more sustainable recovery efforts.

59. Other delegations supported UNDP actions on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and rising gender-based violence rates during the pandemic. They welcomed holistic efforts that included developing action plans on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including risk analysis, mitigation and victim support. They encouraged the UNDP–UN-Women collaboration to ensure robust cross-agency action and coordinated efforts, including on sex disaggregated data. More innovative approaches were needed to ensure women participated as leaders and decision-makers in recovery efforts and future preparedness. They welcomed the UNDP management action plan to address the audit findings on UNDP gender equality and women's empowerment work on results reporting.

60. In response, the Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, said UNDP was meta-analysing lessons from the gender equality strategy to inform the new strategy and working with Governments to devise whole-of-society approaches and multistakeholder dialogues, including with women's organizations. UNDP focused on strengthening its gender capacity and expanding work on gender norms and gender-response tracking to address root causes and power imbalances. UNDP was keen to announce the setting up of the global gender policy observatory to buttress data, analytics and innovation in 2021-2022. It continued to pursue its zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and would increase funding to gender-focused initiatives in the new gender equality strategy.

61. The Director of Gender, UNDP, underscored that in developing its new gender equality strategy UNDP would undertake a multistakeholder consultation process that addressed gender power imbalances and intersectionalities, focused on transformation.

62. The Executive Board took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender strategy, 2018-2021.

VIII. UNDP country programmes and related matters

63. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, provided an overview of the country programme documents for Argentina and Armenia and presented the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia, the third three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar, and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic. In turn, the regional directors for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America and the Caribbean presented the country programme documents for Argentina and Armenia.

64. Regarding the CPD for Armenia, the exchange between the delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan are provided in the following links: (a) [statement](#) by Armenia; and (b) [statement](#) by Azerbaijan.

65. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme document for Argentina ([DP/DCP/ARG/4](#)) and the country programme document for Armenia ([DP/DCP/ARM/5](#)).

66. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia, as approved by the Administrator, as presented in document [DP/2021/18](#).

67. The Executive Board approved the third three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar, presented in document [DP/2021/18](#), and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic ([DP/2021/18/Add.1](#)).

IX. Evaluation

68. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), UNDP, presented the annual report on evaluation, 2020 ([DP/2021/19](#)), the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 ([DP/2021/20](#)), and the third joint Global Environment Facility (GEF)-UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme ([DP/2021/22](#)). The Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP, provided the management commentaries to the annual report on evaluation, and the management responses to the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 ([DP/2021/21](#)) and the third joint GEF-UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme ([DP/2021/23](#)).

Annual report on evaluation, 2020, and evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021

69. Delegations highlighted the valuable IEO contribution to quality, timely evaluations supporting oversight and learning so UNDP could better respond to COVID-19 and support organizational learning and evaluation capacities. Despite the pandemic's impact on its ability to conduct evaluations, IEO adjusted the scope and methodology of evaluations to offset data collection challenges. There was a request for information on how rapid independent country programme reviews bridged data gaps and their usefulness for thematic evaluations. A delegation raised concern that a high number of evaluations, in particular decentralized evaluations, did not receive a satisfactory quality level. UNDP should aim for 'satisfactory' or 'highly satisfactory' ratings and seek agreement on the qualification and presentation of results on the quality of decentralized evaluations. Details were sought on UNDP actions to address concerns over reduced and imbalanced evaluation coverage of project portfolios. And

there was a request for clarity on whether management accepted recommendation 1 that in the new strategic plan UNDP should better define its roles, especially within the new United Nations system environment, and better focus its work on areas of strength and comparative advantage. They asked how management would address the finding that UNDP work to develop integrated, innovative development solutions was falling behind its role as project implementer and how it would address the evaluation's finding that results-based management, monitoring, reporting and learning remained key areas for improvement and the related evaluation recommendation.

70. In response, the Director, IEO, UNDP, said despite COVID-19 IEO completed 15 country programme evaluations using remote data collection, in addition to thematic evaluations. Following its assessment, IEO identified local 'communities and governments' as benefitting least from remote data collection, due to connectivity issues, which IEO sought to overcome working through national research institutes and think-tanks. IEO engaged in evaluation capacity-building of national evaluation systems through the global evaluation initiative to improve use of evidence to inform policies at country level to recover from COVID 19. IEO was working with UNDP management to improve the quality of UNDP decentralized evaluations and agree on uniform presentations of quality assessment results of decentralized evaluations to the Board. He drew attention to ambiguous language in the management response to the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, regarding acceptance or not of some recommendations (1 and 5).

71. The Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP, clarified that UNDP partially accepted recommendation 1 on the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. The focus of the strategic plan, 2022-2025, would be achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Goals, including poverty eradication, structural transformation, governance, and raising ambitions. Country-level COVID-19 recovery was central to that, rooted in United Nations organizations' comparative strengths. Agreeing with recommendation 2, UNDP would pursue digitalization and innovation as two enablers of the new strategic plan. UNDP sought to hone its results tools and capacities, working with stakeholders to become ever more accountable. Management was committed to working with country offices to improve evaluation completion numbers/dates, quality, and expenditure levels. Despite improvements needed in evaluation qualification levels, UNDP was experiencing a positive trend overall, as it pursued its funding target for evaluation.

Third joint GEF-UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme

72. A delegation recognized the contribution of the Small Grant Programme in supporting local actions, particularly among indigenous peoples and grassroots communities. The delegation noted that while it was good to expand access to the Small Grant Programme, it would not support framing it in terms of universal access, as that implied guarantee of funding regardless of merit or potential operational constraints. Small grants were critical to ensuring community autonomy, leadership, and economic opportunities while supporting indigenous resource management.

73. In response, the Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP, said UNDP was committed to scaling up the Small Grants Programme. UNDP was working with the Small Grants Programme to improve access by eligible countries and, despite resource constraints, was upgrading its policy of approval for access, focused on disadvantaged groups, including indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

74. The Director, Nature, Climate and Energy, UNDP, highlighted that country access to the Small Grants Programme was done through capacity assessments, which the GEF Council had to appraise before acceptance.

75. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, said the delegation's comments were in line with the evaluation's recommendations to strengthen the governance of the Small Grants Programme at global and national levels and upgrade the policy on criteria for selectivity as part of future GEF Council discussions.

76. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/5 on UNDP evaluation.

X. United Nations Capital Development Fund

77. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and the Executive Director, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), presented the results achieved by UNCDF in 2020 (DP/2021/24) and the cumulative review of the UNCDF strategic framework, 2018-2021.

78. A group of delegations commended UNCDF transformative work in least developed countries (LDCs) responding to COVID-19 through grants to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local governments. UNCDF innovative financing mechanisms required full United Nations system support and strong partnerships with public and private sectors at national level. UNCDF should consolidate its expertise and leadership, including at subnational level, and pursue women's empowerment through the LDC Investment Platform, making women's economic empowerment central to digital financial solutions in LDCs. UNCDF should continue to deploy blended finance instruments for sustainable development, especially through the BUILD Fund and International Municipal Investment Fund.

79. A second group from the LDCs welcomed UNCDF financial inclusion work in LDCs through e-commerce and digital financing, especially in responding to COVID-19. UNCDF should scale up innovative solutions in digital healthcare, drawing on good practices at national level. The UNCDF bottom-up approach was welcomed, as was its work with local communities, municipalities, and SMEs to extend sustainable development benefits to those furthest behind. They welcomed UNCDF closing of the gender digital divide and mainstreaming gender-responsive approaches in national development processes using gender-disaggregated data. They commended its successes in fiscal decentralization, local governance, capacity-building, and climate-resilient infrastructure financing and called on UNCDF to expand solutions to other LDCs and pursue tailored support for graduating and graduated countries.

80. A third group of delegations said UNCDF should be the entry point for United Nations system work in financial instruments and innovations with public and private entities, taking advantage of and learning from the Fund's rich expertise in innovative finance. UNCDF was encouraged to continue working in 'last mile' settings where financing sources were scarce or unavailable. They welcomed the LDC Investment Platform offering professional capacity to deploy loans and guarantees to last mile investments in LDCs and address the financing gap faced by SME infrastructure projects. They recognized UNCDF support to female-led businesses in LDCs, the integration of climate and environment in the strategic framework, 2022-2025, and encouraged UNCDF to collaborate with United Nations entities in the resident coordinator system.

81. In other interventions, there was a request for details on how UNCDF would support LDCs after graduation, how it addressed the special challenges of fragile LDCs, and what contribution it could make to integrated national financing

frameworks, especially in digital finance. Across the board, delegations called on countries to consider increasing funding to UNCDF core resources to ensure it delivered on its mandate.

82. In response, the Executive Director, UNCDF, said the Fund was working with Governments to define country investment pipelines. It had strengthened its country managers and directed staff to take up a ‘one UNCDF’ when engaging with Governments, prioritizing country needs and collaboration with resident coordinators and UNDP resident representatives. On blended finance funds, UNCDF catalysed private capital by creating two impact investing funds: the International Municipal Investment Fund, in partnership with global investor and asset manager Meridiam to raise funding and invest in municipal projects and local development in cities and municipalities; and the BUILD Fund, in partnership with Bamboo Capital Partners, to invest in SMEs in LDCs, working with donors to ensure risk protection and mitigation, as part of its mandate to support the Fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs. UNCDF was upscaling digital solutions through its new digital strategy to channel household and individual micro-savings into infrastructure investments at local level. This initiative promoted women’s economic empowerment in partnership with Governments and the Generation Equality Forum, focused on economic justice and rights and women’s access to financial resources. UNCDF worked with UNDP on INFFs through a joint digital offering training staff on digital solutions and supporting local governments to implement them. The two collaborated in designing instruments for LDC graduation, including enhancing credit ratings allowing access to markets while UNCDF continued to support LDCs through and after graduation. UNCDF collaborated with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund to invest in local economic development and institutional strengthening in fragile and conflict-affected states, using guarantee instruments that opened the door for third-party investments.

83. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/6 on the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

XI. United Nations Volunteers

84. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and the Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), presented UNV: Report of the Administrator ([DP/2021/25](#)).

85. A group of delegations welcomed UNV achieving almost all its targets, demonstrating its potential to deliver in crises such as COVID-19 and its unique blending of ideas and experiences. The United Nations system should build on UNV work and mainstream good practices to catalyse rapid, inclusive, resilient recovery and ensure safe, affordable vaccines for everyone, everywhere, including through COVAX roll-out. Stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships were needed to strengthen the UN-Volunteers network and expand United Nations promotion of UN-Volunteers. UNV was crucial in bringing the United Nations closer to local communities; digital education was an area where UNV could contribute significantly. UNV successfully ensured diversity and inclusion in recruitment, including increased numbers of UN-Volunteers from various nationalities, backgrounds, and skills. It was alone among United Nations entities with a majority women workforce, mostly from the South, and created opportunities for volunteers with disabilities. UNV helped increase the number of women participating in peacebuilding dialogues, strengthened women’s capacities, and empowered local communities. UNV should create innovative platforms to maximize volunteers’ knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship in its next strategic framework.

86. Across the board, delegations said volunteerism was the core of a people-centred approach to achieving the 2030 Agenda. UN-Volunteers were instrumental to reform at country level and in dealing with humanitarian crises, and volunteerism was key to South-South cooperation, supporting local knowledge-sharing and innovation. Offering a powerful means to address SIDS' challenges, UNV should leverage its system-wide support to advance SAMOA Pathway priorities. The Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) supported system-wide action to COVID-19 and enabled UNV to flexibly, strategically and efficiently allocate resources for delivery. Delegations called on Member States to consider contributing to the SVF and encouraged UNV to continue to diversify its donor base. UNV made tremendous progress in gender equality, inclusion and digital transformation and should continue to spearhead digital volunteering, diversifying and expanding UNV talent pools. Welcoming UNV role in developing national volunteering programmes, they called on UNV to continue to ensure full understanding of duty-of-care responsibilities in agreements with host agencies. They commended UNV commitment to United Nations coordination mechanisms and collaboration with resident coordinator offices. There was a call for the General Assembly to announce an international year of volunteerism for development.

87. In response, the Associate Administrator, UNDP, said the UNV decentralized footprint was a major asset that provided last-mile connectedness with people on the ground, crucial for any development pathway. She commended UNV for achieving gender parity among staff and volunteer workforce and called on system-wide scaling up of such UNV successes.

88. The Executive Coordinator, UNV, said UNV would continue prioritizing local-level action to build back better and pursue SDG achievement. Collaborative models emerging within the volunteer community pointed to blending of volunteer action between national and international volunteers, and country-level and online volunteers, as future priorities. He encouraged Member States to consider contributing to UNV, especially through the SVF, an important vehicle to innovate and trailblaze new spheres of volunteer action. UN-Volunteers would continue to backstop resident coordinator offices. Capacity constraints in resident coordinator offices and agency-sponsored programmes continued to benefit from the online volunteering platform during COVID-19, especially to address socioeconomic impacts. UNV support to country teams was reflected in stronger references to local volunteer action in UNSDCFs; UNV had earmarked resources for the SVF to support joint United Nations COVID-19 responses. UNV would continue working with UNDP and United Nations system to contribute to reform at local level, including by expanding its support for multi-country offices in SIDS. Likewise, it would continue to close the gender gap, focusing on countries/regions where disparities persisted. Despite a positive evaluation, UNV was redoubling efforts to ensure persons with disabilities benefitted from and contributed to United Nations work. UNV took seriously its duty-of-care shared responsibility with host entities of UN-Volunteers, which had also demonstrated their commitment throughout COVID-19. Past international years of volunteers had made significant contributions to volunteering at the global and national levels. They also bolstered UNV partnerships with local communities, which remains a top UNV priority.

89. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/7 on United Nations Volunteers: Report of the Administrator.

UNFPA segment

XII. Statement by the UNFPA Executive Director and annual report

90. In her opening remarks ([available on the UNFPA website](#)), the UNFPA Executive Director said COVID-19 was testing the bounds of global solidarity and commitments to multilateralism, even as it had shown no one was safe until everyone was. UNFPA had foreseen the pandemic's consequences: surge in domestic violence, spikes in child marriage, teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation, pregnancy-related complications and death. It feared pandemic-related disruptions would slow progress on ending gender-based violence and female genital mutilation and cause millions of child marriages. UNFPA rose to the challenge, together with partners and programme countries, ensuring health workers received personal protective equipment and COVID-related training, delivering sexual and reproductive health services, strategically prepositioning and monitoring stocks of contraceptives and life-saving supplies, and ensuring access to mental health and psychosocial support to girls and women subjected to violence.

91. The Fund's swift pandemic response underscored the results of the strategic plan, 2018-2021, and pointed to five lessons for the strategic plan, 2022-2025: (a) *solidarity was survival*, as UNFPA stepped up international solidarity, including through official development assistance (ODA) commitments and equitable access to vaccines; (b) *functioning health systems were essential to larger freedoms and development ambitions*, underscoring the need for an integrated approach to health, economic, social, humanitarian, peace interventions; (c) *accelerating progress*, since even impressive gains were fragile and achieving the three transformative results demanded resilience; (d) *achieving a strong core resources base*, for UNFPA agility and responsiveness emerged from the flexibilities early payment of core resources afforded; and (e) *gender equality and empowerment of women and girls were key to every development goal*.

92. The strategic plan, 2022-2025, would be a global 'call to action' to achieve the three zeros. UNFPA would contribute to pursuing resilience, building on its comparative advantages as a public health agency within the United Nations system. In 2020, joint programming, operations and funding rose as part of system-wide responses to the pandemic; pooled funding accounted for 27 per cent of total non-core resources. But ODA reductions, due to slowed economies, risked hampering collective efforts. And while ODA remained vital, increasing flows of public and private domestic and international finance were essential to bridge the investment gap and achieve the three zeros. For its part, UNFPA fully achieved all four outputs and realized operational efficiency gains of \$8.3 million in 2020. However, the importance of core resources and multi-year funding could not be overstated.

93. UNFPA continued to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance in more than 60 countries. The Executive Director saw first-hand the critical need for such essential services during her humanitarian missions, where she heard harrowing stories of desperation, sexual violence and exploitation. Yet the women she met were emboldened to call for a greater voice in decision-making related to their safety and protection. At global level, UNFPA was implementing a strategy to improve the quality, availability and delivery of humanitarian supplies and a new approach to gender-based violence, and it was strengthening humanitarian data capacity and human resources, including for its surge response.

94. UNFPA had strengthened its independent oversight activities, with investments growing at a higher rate than overall income projections. The new integrated budget

included a substantially increased investment in the investigation function. UNFPA obtained an unqualified external audit opinion in 2020 and achieved a 96 per cent implementation rate for internal audit recommendations. It continued to invest in fraud prevention, detection and 'second-line-of-defence' controls and introduced mitigation measures for risks stemming from additional flexibilities to address the pandemic. The Fund was strengthening its capacities for protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, including in the humanitarian sector, as Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) champion, and through a roster of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment experts for rapid deployment. UNFPA led efforts to harmonize system-wide approaches to implementing partner sexual exploitation and abuse and continued to look at every allegation and respond in a prompt, structured, effective manner, putting prevention at the centre of its efforts.

95. Delegations acknowledged UNFPA frontline work ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights services for all throughout the pandemic. They recognized its unique role advancing implementation of the International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and long-term global efforts to reduce maternal mortality and promote sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. They welcomed progress against the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and integration in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all and alignment with the 2020 quadrennial review. They urged UNFPA to pursue harmonized, efficient, robust policies and programmatic and corporate approaches, including joint programming; explore partnerships with international financial institutions to share data, analysis, and financing for the Goals; and continue to ensure gender equality, diversity, disability inclusion, climate action, biodiversity and environment were at the centre of all activities. They appreciated the Fund's greater contribution to system-wide results, coordination and coherence through joint programming, addressing gender-based violence and reproductive health and reproductive rights in all settings.

96. A group of delegations commended UNFPA for sounding the alarm on the pandemic-related spike in gender-based violence and need for gender-disaggregated data to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. They welcomed that the three transformative results remained central to the strategic plan, 2022-2025, and encouraged UNFPA to continue leading efforts to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, harmonizing efforts with the United Nations entities. They commended the Fund's ability, despite finite resources, to prioritize investments, while recalling the importance of the Funding Compact and sufficient, predictable core resources as key to achieving the 2030 Agenda. They acknowledged UNFPA work costing the achievement of the three zeros and helping countries mainstream budgeting. Improved UNFPA collaboration with United Nations organizations at country level had led to better use of resources and better results, including better integration of human rights and more diverse partnerships.

97. Another group of delegations said UNFPA played a key role responding ensuring continuity of sexual and reproductive health services, addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices, and safeguarding the supply of contraceptives and reproductive health commodities. The COVID-19 response had to follow a human rights-based approach, reflecting the voices of marginalized groups, and pursue adaptive programming and universal health coverage. UNFPA focus on high-quality disaggregated data as a basis for tailor-made solutions was appreciated, crucial to ensuring an inclusive, gender-transformative global COVID-19 response. A strong vision, rooted in human rights, had to guide planning and strategic considerations, focused on the three zeros. The group called on UNFPA to: (a) strengthen its response to underlying conditions causing vulnerability, particularly among women and girls, and undertake stronger preventive gender-based violence efforts together with

partners; (b) safeguard its normative role, including through better monitoring; (c) step up recognition of youth as champions of the Goals and devise plans to mobilize youth systematically, including to bridge the digital divide; and (d) mobilize adequate, predictable, sustainable, flexible core funding to safeguard the continuity of UNFPA activities and timely delivery of programmes.

98. In individual interventions, delegations commended UNFPA for integrating climate in programming and family planning in disaster risk reduction and climate response strategies, and for contributing to the Greening the Blue initiative. UNFPA was encouraged to continue embedding United Nations reforms in its work and deploy resources to maximum effect, including by increasing data systems' interoperability. The reclassification of earmarked resources should reflect limits developing countries faced due to indebtedness. The strategic investment mechanism to mobilize public and private resources was constructive but it was unclear how UNFPA would reap its benefits and protect core resources. UNFPA should ensure the strategic plan, 2022-2025, addressed the special needs of MICs, using disaggregated data, and increase its support to SIDS. They welcomed the output on population changes/data in the new plan, reflecting ageing, low fertility and climate. They appreciated UNFPA strengthening of national capacities to conduct censuses and gather/analyse data and demographic statistics, and support to advance national gender-equality efforts and work with youth to foster resilience and engagement. Multilateralism and adjusting activities to national priorities were crucial. UNFPA was cautioned against using non-consensual terms to which some delegations did not ascribe.

99. In response, the UNFPA Executive Director said the ICPD Programme of Action remained the bedrock of the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, grounded in the principle of 'leaving no one behind' and focused on accelerating the three zeros. The Programme of Action recognized the links between population, sustainable development and climate, and centrality of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights to empowerment and collective sustainability. UNFPA had integrated climate throughout its comprehensive sexuality education programming so that holistic age-appropriate, culturally sensitive education included the relationship between climate change and sexual and reproductive health outcomes. UNFPA was working with Governments to strengthen national early-warning systems for humanitarian and development crises and to transform norms, laws and mindsets.

100. Gender-based violence and femicide represented the most difficult challenges of the three zeros. UNFPA was working to close the funding gap to achieve the three zeros for the entire sector. In 2021, UNFPA was co-leading the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and was a core contributor to the strategic implementation of Youth 2030. Internally, the My Body, My Life, My World initiative accelerated and expanded UNFPA engagement with youth. To bridge the digital divide, UNFPA pursued outreach and advocacy at local levels through its risk communication and community engagement initiative, including the #youthagainstCOVID campaign. In response to the global humanitarian evaluation, UNFPA was finalizing a new disability and inclusion strategy.

101. UNFPA was engaged with international financial institutions, the World Bank, and development and regional banks, to reach underserved populations in MICs, including through South-South and triangular cooperation. It also addressed the most vulnerable in LDCs and SIDS, taking a unified view to strengthening national health and early-warning systems and prepositioning with United Nations organizations. UNFPA worked through interagency initiatives to improve vulnerability assessments and study population/health data through the lens of climate fragility. UNFPA remained committed to United Nations reform and continued to lead on business

operations reform together with the United Nations Development Coordination Office. Over a quarter of UNFPA funding came through joint and pooled sources, which had grown almost two-fold since 2018.

102. In the new strategic plan, UNFPA would strengthen its normative role in policy advocacy, data generation, analytics, and strategic communication, including promoting data systems interoperability. Its new strategic communication strategy would strengthen the Fund's commitment to protect, promote and evolve. By strengthening its normative role, UNFPA helped to give a voice to the voiceless. Through its lifecycle approach, the UNFPA global programme on aging and low fertility supported Governments with population policy advice and fostered intergenerational solidarity. Looking ahead, UNFPA was focused on leveraging innovation, being adaptive and imaginative, replicating what worked, and sharing best practices.

103. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/8 on implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021: Report of the Executive Director.

XIII. Evaluation

104. The Director, Evaluation Office, UNFPA, presented his annual report on the evaluation function, 2020 ([DP/FPA/2021/3](#)) and the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) presented the management response to the report ([DP/FPA/2021/CRP.3](#)).

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2020: Report of the Executive Director

105. A group of delegations commended the Evaluation Office for adapting the evaluation function to COVID-19 and mitigating its impact on evaluations. They welcomed the office's excellent performance, achieving almost all targets of its key performance indicators, and its strengthening of decentralized evaluations resulting in a high implementation rate of good-quality evaluations. They welcomed progress implementing management responses and supported planned actions to enhance implementation of centralized evaluation recommendations. They stressed the centrality of the evaluation function in implementing strategic plans and evidence-based decision-making. They also welcomed UNFPA work with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to refresh the 2020 quadrennial review monitoring and reporting framework, and continuous innovation in gender equality and women's empowerment, especially mainstreaming them in all thematic areas. They appreciated the steady increase of the UNFPA evaluation expenditure ratio closer to the total programme expenditure defined in the evaluation policy and commended the Evaluation Office for supporting the independent system-wide evaluation mechanism and contributing to drafting the system-wide evaluation policy.

106. In response, the Director, Evaluation Office, UNFPA, assured the Board of the office's continued commitment to strengthening the evaluation function. Defining projections of the future expenditure ratio was difficult because the percentage depended on UNFPA future income. In absolute terms, there would be an increase in expenditure, continuing the positive trend.

107. The Director, Policy and Strategy Division, UNFPA, reassured Board members that UNFPA continued to strengthen and innovate its independent oversight and assurance activities with investments growing at a higher rate than overall income projections. That was the case even during recent austerity periods when UNFPA sought to safeguard budgets for the independent functions. UNFPA had established a financial ring-fencing mechanism to ensure funding for country programme

evaluations where only limited resources were available. UNFPA was committed to ensuring sufficient resources for the evaluation function; the new institutional budget would reflect this.

Evaluation of the UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment

108. The Evaluation Advisor, Evaluation Office, UNFPA, presented the evaluation of the UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment (DP/FPA/2019/CRP.8). The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) presented the management commentaries to the report (DP/FPA/2019/CRP.9).

109. A group of delegations commended UNFPA commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental to its mandate and application across all development, humanitarian and peace efforts and at global, regional and country levels. They appreciated the heightened importance of gender-transformative approaches, UNFPA leadership in response to and prevention of gender-based violence, promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and response to and prevention of harmful practices. They recognized the importance of UNFPA cooperation with partners such as UNICEF and UN-Women and noted that integrated intersectional programming on gender equality was necessary to accelerate work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They looked forward to improved UNFPA work on social normative change and its incorporation throughout the strategic plan, 2022-2025. They called on UNFPA to strengthen its work to address barriers and inequality of access to sexual and reproductive health services and ensure follow-up to metrics in Goal indicator 5.6.1. Prioritizing gender equality demanded sufficient human and financial resources and more core resources; UNFPA should maintain key gender and gender-based violence expertise in UNFPA staff positions at all levels.

110. A delegation encouraged UNFPA to address gender-based violence as a standalone objective, integrated into family planning, reproductive and maternal health, in humanitarian and development settings. UNFPA should strengthen its capacity to provide gender-based violence prevention and response and sexual and reproductive health leadership, coordination and programming across contexts, including a survivor perspective. UNFPA should seek to better understand how gender norms and inequalities exacerbated the impacts of shocks and stressors. In future evaluations, UNFPA should explore evaluation methods that enable safe, secure data collection for the most vulnerable.

111. In response, the Director, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch, UNFPA, said UNFPA was scaling up its prevention efforts to address the root causes of gender-based violence and lack of bodily autonomy. It was strengthening its approaches to transform harmful stereotypes into more positive versions of masculinity focused on men and boys. That included strengthening comprehensive sexuality education for social norms and service delivery through early intervention strategies, gender-transformative rights-based measures and a lifecycle approach. UNFPA collaborated with UNICEF and UN-Women through the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All. The strategic plan, 2022-2025, would focus on strengthening women's decision-making, reflect how to improve interagency cooperation on gender issues in the COVID-19 context, underscore women as agents-of-change, and promote women's and girls' voices in disaster, climate, resilience strategies, building on the Fund's normative role.

112. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/9 on UNFPA evaluation.

XIV. UNFPA country programmes and related matters

113. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided an overview of the country programme document for Armenia, as well as the third, three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic. In turn, the UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia provided details from the regional perspective.

114. Member States provided supportive statements to the country programmes and extensions.

115. Regarding the CPD for Armenia, the exchange between the delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan are provided in the following links: (a) [statement](#) by Armenia; and (b) [statement](#) by Azerbaijan.

116. The Board approved, in accordance with decision 2014/7, the country programme document for Armenia ([DP/FPA/CPD/ARM/4/Rev.1](#)). It also approved the third, three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/3](#).

UNOPS segment

XV. Statement by the UNOPS Executive Director and annual report

117. In her address ([available on the UNOPS website](#)), the UNOPS Executive Director presented her annual report ([DP/OPS/2021/4](#)), commenting that 2020 was a time of resilience and unity. UNOPS was quick to adapt to the new reality using state-of-the-art technology to address the COVID-19 crisis. UNOPS would continue to provide efficient procurement of medical supplies and equipment, strengthen the infrastructure of health systems, assist in vaccination roll-out programmes, and play its part in the collective task to put the world back on track towards the Goals. The United Nations needed to do more with limited resources and UNOPS stood ready to bring its efficient, effective practices to support partners. In 2020, UNOPS global project delivery exceeded \$2.2 billion, a major achievement considering COVID-19 disruptions. Almost \$900 million dollars' worth of new agreements were signed to combat COVID-19. That included work to restore basic services, mitigate health and socioeconomic impacts, and engage with United Nations partners to respond to natural disasters.

118. Throughout its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, UNOPS focused on adding value to the 2030 Agenda through effective, cost-efficient solutions, building new strategic partnerships, better understanding partners' needs, accessing new funding sources to address mutual challenges. In 2020, UNOPS signed new agreements that exceeded \$10 billion. This step-change reflected the trust and confidence partners had in its capacity to deliver quality services, even under extraordinary circumstances. In the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNOPS aimed to build on its achievements, supporting partners to achieve the Goals. Guided by the 2030 Agenda, UNOPS would support countries in developing their capacity and resource base, focused on quality infrastructure, improved public procurement, and its Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3i) initiative.

119. Moving forward, UNOPS continued to simplify, streamline and scale its processes, developing information technology systems to enable efficiency, agility

and flexibility as it continued to manage its assets and finances responsibly. UNOPS was committed to reform and engaged United Nations partners in accordance with its unique non-programmatic implementation mandate and self-financing business model. UNOPS multi-country office approach allowed it to serve countries with a limited footprint. Its nurturing of speak-up culture and zero-tolerance on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment was another indication of its investment in reform. UNOPS had made notable progress mainstreaming gender in projects but needed to step up efforts to close the gap. Within its workforce, gender equity remained a key priority. Internally, UNOPS had reached gender parity with women representing 49 per cent of its workforce. In 2021, UNOPS would widen its approach to ensure a broader, more diverse, inclusive model.

120. A group of delegations welcomed the significant rise in UNOPS service delivery during the pandemic, highlighting partners' trust in UNOPS and its role enhancing infrastructure investment and fast-tracking sustainable recovery. UNOPS made notable contributions to strengthening the capacity of national health infrastructure, delivering medical supplies, laboratory equipment, lifesaving medicines. UNOPS engagements in climate vulnerable countries should focus on building infrastructure to withstand climatic shocks, using the 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement as blueprints for a new sustainable infrastructure investment. UNOPS was encouraged to work with stakeholders in countries to promote gender-responsive infrastructure design and build national capacities in digital education infrastructure, making it a priority in the next strategic plan. UNOPS should seek to tailor its work to complement the priorities set by national Governments.

121. A group of delegations said UNOPS comparative advantage in infrastructure building helped least developed countries achieve their development priorities. UNOPS should leverage its experience to mitigate infrastructure gaps in LDCs, especially in education and health, help LDCs build sustainable infrastructure and technology, and ensure rapid recovery and resilience against climate emergencies and shocks through climate, disaster-focused investment decisions. UNOPS was encouraged to use its multi-stakeholder partnerships to help start-up businesses expand creative solutions in digital infrastructure and knowledge to reap the benefits of information and frontier technologies. They called on UNOPS to support LDCs in mainstreaming gender and youth priorities in investment decisions to ensure accelerated socioeconomic mobility for women and youth. UNOPS was encouraged to assist graduating and graduated LDCs facing high back-sliding risks due to the pandemic by strengthening infrastructure to ensure sustainable graduation and resilience against current and future shocks.

122. A third group of delegations sought details on the risks and challenges of implementing activities in 2020, given that a majority of 2020 results indicators in the sustainable implementation framework showed a decline compared to 2019. They acknowledged UNOPS contributions enabling the United Nations to deliver peace, security and development and recognized its efforts to establish follow-up systems for crosscutting sustainability elements. They commended UNOPS for its sustainability reporting in line with the Global Reporting Initiative, demonstrating its leadership in innovation and technical support to partners, and welcomed its commitment to United Nations reform and the direction set in the 2020 quadrennial review.

123. Other delegations welcomed the pivotal role the S3i initiative could play in boosting green recovery, impact technology and entrepreneurship, as it undertook socially responsible projects globally. They welcomed the creation of the UNOPS Client Board as a framework to discuss operational matters and opportunities to strengthen collaborative efforts, including interagency coordination. They sought clarity on why UNOPS business volume with United Nations organizations remained

stagnant while it expanded with outside partners. UNOPS management was encouraged to update and improve the organization's framework of governance, risk management, and control to keep pace with the expanding volume and scope of UNOPS work.

124. In response, the Executive Director said UNOPS was using the lessons of its rapid pandemic response to inform its new strategic plan. Complimentary ways of working with United Nations system partners, including through aligned reporting standards, continued to be key. UNOPS would deepen its strengths in health and fragile settings in the new strategic plan, focused on quality infrastructure, in line with nationally defined priorities, including in SIDS. As official development assistance was insufficient, UNOPS made the S3i initiative one of the main priorities of the new plan given its growth opportunities in health, affordable homes and energy, through efficient and effective business operations. Prevention was a key driver of UNOPS work and, as a demand-driven organization, UNOPS strived to be transparent and financially viable. UNOPS would continue to pursue gender parity internally and mainstream gender throughout its activities. For many countries, procurement was an important part of gross national product; UNOPS supported Governments through capacity-building to ensure public procurement added value to national priorities, assured transparency and fought corruption. UNOPS used its procurement expertise to better coordinate with United Nations organizations.

125. The Director, Implementation Practices and Standards, UNOPS, said UNOPS had developed an evidence-based infrastructure framework as an integrated approach to planning, implementing, and managing national infrastructure. The framework helped Governments move away from traditional silo-based planning to interdependent infrastructure systems. COVID-19 highlighted the importance and vulnerability of digital infrastructure, so UNOPS was helping Governments learn from the pandemic to ensure resilience in infrastructure systems. Evidence-based planning helped Governments and decision-makers achieve national development plans with better knowledge of demographic, economic, and climate change risks, key for Paris Agreement commitments. UNOPS welcomed the outcome of the 2021 Multilateral Organisation Performance Network appraisal of UNOPS as an example of successful country-level implementation. In response, UNOPS would work to better align its reporting with UNSDCF's and specific SDG outputs, working with partners to determine its tangible contributions.

126. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/10 on the annual report of the Executive Director.

Part three
Second regular session 2021

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 30 August to 2 September 2021**

I. Organizational matters

1. The second regular session 2021 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS continued to be held virtually, on an exceptional basis, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 30 August to 2 September 2021.

2. The Executive Board adopted the agenda and workplan for its second regular session 2021 (DP/2021/L.3), as orally amended, and approved the report of the annual session 2021 (DP/2021/26). The Board took note of the draft annual workplan for 2022 (DP/2021/CRP.2) and approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2022.

3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2021 appeared in document DP/2022/2, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).

4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2022/22 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2022:

First regular session:	31 January to 4 February 2022
Annual session:	6 to 10 June 2022
Second regular session:	30 August to 2 September 2022

Statement by the President of the Board

5. The President of the Executive Board stressed that to meet prevailing development and humanitarian challenges the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS strategic plans, 2022-2025, up for Board approval at the session had to be ambitious, creative and innovative. Only in that way could they serve to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, counter the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and meet the growing needs and expectations of Member States, while operating with limited financial resources. In 2021, she affirmed, the Bureau of the Board had fulfilled its commitment to ensure strategic, inclusive, transparent, fruitful consultations, with some 20 informal consultations dedicated to the three organizations' respective strategic plans, in addition to regional consultations and bilateral engagements on various aspects of their work. As a result, the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS strategic plans were ambitious, robust and forward-looking, and represented a delicate balance of the differing needs of an ever more diverse membership. It was therefore the role of the Board to send a strong message of unity by endorsing the strategic plans and reaching consensus on the decisions up for adoption. The President said the United Nations funds and programmes were among the most powerful instruments to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and build back better and greener, saving lives, helping eradicate poverty and improving the conditions of billions of people. The Board would continue to fulfil its supervisory role of United Nations development system activities, ensuring it responded to the needs of programme countries.

UNDP segment

II. UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025

6. In his opening remarks ([available on the UNDP website](#)), the UNDP Administrator said that the current extraordinary times demanded extraordinary measures. The world was facing an existential crisis laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the climate emergency. As human and environmental systems became ever more interdependent, risks accumulated and eroded humanity's collective resilience. But the pandemic, he said, had also opened up space for new

approaches and policies and offered lessons on the way forward and doing things differently. Development itself was changing, he emphasized. To address the systemic challenges all people faced, communities had to collaborate towards mutual goals and co-invest in public goods, built on equal partnerships rooted in shared interests, experiences and multilateral responses. #NextGenUNDP was making UNDP fit-for-purpose internally through its People 2030 strategy, its new data strategy, the adoption of a more proactive, dynamic approaches to risk management that incentivized innovation and accountability, its dedication to operational excellence, and its investments in hard-to-measure transformative change through a new enterprise resources planning platform that promised greater efficiency, results and resources planning, and monitoring and impact measurement.

7. The new UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025, (DP/2021/28) up for Board approval, reflected that evolution. UNDP had advanced its thinking, rediscovered its voice as a thought-leader in development, become more transparent and accountable, and deepened its engagement in the United Nations development system, bolstering its collective ability to deliver as United Nations reforms intended, together with all its partners. The subsequent four years would be starkly different, with UNDP being more ambitious than ever: (a) expanding human capabilities through which 100 million people could escape multidimensional poverty; (b) helping 800 million people exercise their democratic right to vote, many for the first time; (c) supporting access to clean energy for 500 million people; and (d) promoting the investment of over \$1 trillion of public expenditure and private capital in the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. The Administrator stressed that in all its work UNDP was dedicated to its core mission – eradicating poverty and supporting sustainable development for all. To drive its new strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNDP would support *three directions of change*: (a) structural transformation towards more inclusive, green and digital transitions; (b) leaving no-one behind, grounded in a rights-based approach centred on human agency; (c) building resilience in the face of systemic uncertainty and risk; and it would use *its core expertise*: six signature solutions on poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality; all of which would be *powered by three enablers* for scale and speed: strategic innovation, digitalization and development financing.

9. As part of this drive, the Administrator said UNDP would be adopting a new approach to crisis and fragile settings. Here, its priorities would be: (a) *understanding systemic, multidimensional risks* so it could build resilience and human security; (b) *prioritizing prevention*: addressing the root causes of existing crises and helping to prevent those in the future; (c) *investing in data and analytics*, early warning and horizon scanning, and using foresight to uncover future trends and change drivers and protect and promote development pathways; (d) *designing and implementing gender-responsive, risk-informed development solutions* that bring different sectors together towards collective outcomes, strengthened by greater coherence among humanitarian, development, human rights and peace and security partners; and (e) *developing a new business model that was fit-for-purpose for complex delivery environments*.

10. Across the board, delegations expressed strong support for the new UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025, and commended UNDP for the highly inclusive, transparent, engaging consultation process throughout its development. The new strategic plan, 2022-2025, highlighted UNDP comparative strengths and its unique combination of global and local presence, sector competence, partnerships, and integrated whole-of-society approaches. They welcomed and shared the UNDP analysis of the prevailing development landscape, planetary emergency and increased poverty, where the COVID-19 pandemic crisis both exposed and reinforced existing inequalities within and between countries, and where multilateralism was under

pressure. They said the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, was well-tuned to those trends and positioned UNDP as a crucial international development partner, in accordance with the intentions expressed by Member States in the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([A/RES/75/233](#)).

11. A group of delegations on behalf of the Bureau of the Board welcomed the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, and expected UNDP with its broad mandate and global presence to lead a large part of United Nations multilateral efforts on the ground in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They stressed that UNDP was a crucial player in the global development architecture; a development-based approach had therefore to remain its priority. They were pleased to see that eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions remained the heart of the new plan and the main purpose of structural transformation in achieving long-term solutions. That was especially crucial for the most vulnerable countries that required tailored support to grow new businesses, entrepreneurs and jobs and ensure opportunities for the burgeoning youth population, women and girls. They also welcomed the UNDP shift toward targeted actions to tackle the interconnected problems of climate change, the blue economy and disaster risk reduction, and supported the UNDP vision for a ‘tectonic’ shift in the development paradigm to bridge the gaps created by COVID-19 and galvanize digitalization at a pace and scale to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. And they reiterated the importance of predictable regular (core) resources.

12. A second group of delegations expected democratic governance and human rights to continue to be the UNDP backbone and expected UNDP to continue to lead by example, providing thought leadership and implementing capacity support. They commended UNDP for its overall approach to human development within planetary boundaries, mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, and ensuring just and equitable development for all. They encouraged UNDP to continue to seek and support holistic solutions that combined adaptation and mitigation efforts and supported its special attention to least developed countries, small island developing states, and the most vulnerable countries when supporting climate resilience and climate change adaptation. They viewed sustainable blue economies as part of integrated solutions to climate adaptation and food security and expected an increase in joint programming with other United Nation organizations to reduce fragmentation of climate and environmental projects. They called on UNDP to manage its environmental footprint in the strategic plan, 2022-2025. They expressed concern with the lack of gender-equality design in programming and in dialogue with partners and called on UNDP to take concrete measures to prioritize gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the new plan.

13. A third group of delegations welcomed the notable degree of interlinkages and complementarities across the United Nations development system and among UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as reflected in their strategic plans and common indicators in their integrated results and resources frameworks, which would greatly help to establish a new generation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. They commended the organizations’ efforts to identify areas of joint engagement and to align their contributions to results achieved collectively, making connections and complementarities visible and measurable and contributing to a stronger, more effective United Nations development system. They called on UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women to leverage their comparative advantages for coordinated, effective system-wide collaboration and agency-specific contributions to meeting needs on the ground, under effective resident coordinator leadership, to achieve

collective results effectively and efficiently. They called on the organizations to monitor and report on results achieved collectively, particularly in building capacities and enabling environments to achieve long-term development results from a system-wide perspective, based on leveraging comparative advantages for greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.

14. A fourth group of delegations recognized that the strategic plan, 2022-2025, was an agency-owned document that did not fully capture all concerns and priorities of Member States, but they stressed that the plan served as a global framework that would enable UNDP to best fulfil its mandate and support countries in delivering on their national development needs and priorities. They strongly encouraged UNDP to work in close cooperation with the other United Nations funds and programmes and relevant United Nations entities to align programming with the country-specific Cooperation Frameworks, in close consultation with national Governments, to adequately respond to country needs and priorities.

15. Other delegations welcomed the UNDP response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and recovery efforts and encouraged it to continue initiatives to create employment, bolster health care system, promote research, science and technology, address the specific vulnerabilities of least developed countries, small island developing states, and middle-income countries, and increase utilization of local experts in programme and project interventions. They called on donors and partners to tackle vaccine access and equity, support and advocate for a conflict-sensitive lens in UNDP programming, increase Sustainable Development Goals financing, and adopt approaches that prioritize prevention, stabilization, transformation and sustainability. They called on donors and partners to consider increasing funding without heavy earmarking to enable UNDP to enjoy the flexibility and predictability to deliver programmes to support the building of prosperous, structurally transformed economies that leave no one behind. They stressed the key importance of national ownership and leadership in requesting assistance based on national needs and priorities as nationally determined.

16. In response, the UNDP Administrator said that lessons in developing previous strategic plans showed the value of engaging Member States early in the process. UNDP therefore began developing the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, in close cooperation with partners more than a year in advance. This facilitated a shared understanding of the prevailing global development context and identified shared opportunities to act. Out of this emerged the prominence of eradicating poverty which, he said, together with tackling inequality which remained the core of UNDP work and the fulcrum of its new strategic plan. Recognizing the inadequacies of trickle-down economics, UNDP worked holistically through integrated approaches and digitalization to focus on creating livelihood opportunities, enabling people to develop assets, and facilitating access to markets, working closely with Governments and the private sector. In doing so, UNDP was able to connect those various elements and to yield multiple outcomes in the fight against poverty.

17. The UNDP ongoing COVID-19 response was woven into the new strategic plan and focused on helping countries capitalize on the moment to transition to more inclusive, greener and digital economies. Ensuring vaccine access was central to those activities. UNDP had teamed up with the University of Oxford and the World Health Organization (WHO) to create a dashboard for vaccine equity, with the purpose of demonstrating the implications and costs of failing to vaccinate billions of people. Such data-driven approaches were key in UNDP innovative work to explore the potentials of citizen science and crowdsourcing to engage people in the development process and drive UNDP holistic development design. Central to this was the significant UNDP investment in digitalization, as it worked with partners to devise a

development approach to digitalization focused on designing digital ecosystems and ensuring digital readiness at country level to address national development priorities.

18. On the funding and financing front, the Administrator said UNDP had seen significant shifts in 2020. That included an unexpected increase in core funding and a 43 per cent increase in government contributions from programme countries to non-core funding. UNDP remained focused on engaging Member States to put the organization on a more strategic financing track and in raising partners' interest in the UNDP 'core campaign'. That included ensuring that partners and their constituents understood the UNDP value proposition and galvanizing a positive narrative of multilateralism as effective and efficient, thereby countering misconceptions and encouraging investments in the United Nations. Central to that effort was a more refined understanding of UNDP comparative strengths and advantages, which Member States recognized in the new strategic plan, and which were grounded in integrated approaches and solutions to challenges such as climate change, poverty reduction and the blue economy, in full alignment with United Nations reform and the principles of the 2020 quadrennial review. The Administrator reiterated that UNDP was committed to joint engagements and results while underscoring the importance of being strategic and relevant in a constrained resource environment. That meant pursuing targeted partnerships at country level with resident coordinators and United Nations country team members, in which UNDP had invested significantly. When considering progress through joint engagements and results, it was therefore important to take into account such targeted initiatives as they were more traceable and measurable.

19. The Administrator emphasized that United Nations norms and values were an integral part of the UNDP mandate. UNDP would always engage with partners based on the human rights and governance principles embodied in the Charter while being fully committed to addressing countries' nationally defined priorities and needs through partnership. As part of this, gender equity remained a top priority, as reflected in the new strategic plan, 2022-2025. Throughout its work, and with other United Nations entities, UNDP implemented programmes that contained both explicit and implicit investments in gender equity. That said, UNDP investments in gender equity were lower than forecasted. In the new strategic plan, UNDP would up its investments in gender equity, continuing to mainstream it throughout programming; the new enterprise resource planning system would allow UNDP to measure the impact on gender equality of programmes in areas such as climate, governance or digitalization. And to reduce its environmental footprint, UNDP would continue to implement its environmental management plan, including the Greening Moonshot initiative, and was on target to meet its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030.

20. On the larger humanitarian front, the Administrator stressed the importance of tackling complex situations on the ground through a holistic approach that went beyond the three pillars of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, learning from the experiences in vulnerable settings where conflict had become a dominant variable and where the international response was often reduced to a narrow set of engagement points. In the current Afghanistan crisis and others, UNDP and United Nations organizations were a major asset as they had already built a significant presence on the ground and with the support of the international community could continue together their work through the transition period ahead.

21. The Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, confirmed that in response to the crisis in Afghanistan UNDP national teams were fully deployed on the ground and continued to work closely with civil society partners and local contractors. As soon as conditions permitted, UNDP would send in an international support team. In anticipation of the impending crisis, UNDP had pivoted to eight area-

based, geographically specific portfolios focused on essential services, working in narrower operating spaces throughout the country though mainly in the capital, Kabul. Together with other United Nations organizations, UNDP activities focused on livelihoods, based on the drivers of displacement, and extreme vulnerability, including through a human security lens. UNDP welcomed the request that it lead on the economic drivers and stabilization and early recovery. Using a direct implementation modality, UNDP would be better able to report to member States on its activities in the country.

22. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/14 on the UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025.

III. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

23. The Director, UNDP Bureau for Management Services, presented the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025, ([DP/2021/29](#)) and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025 ([DP/2021/30](#)).

24. Delegations made no comments on this item.

25. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/15 on the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025.

IV. Structured funding dialogue

26. The Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, presented the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, ([DP/2021/31](#)) and its annexes (annex 1: detailed annual review of the financial situation, 2020 and annex 2: progress against entity-specific commitments to the Funding Compact). Also tabled was the annual review of the financial situation of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), 2020 ([DP/2021/32](#)).

Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021

27. A delegation welcomed the improvements to the report and the UNDP harmonized approach with UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, which was informative and effective. The delegation expressed support for the UNDP call for an overall increase in funding to core resources to reach the 30 per cent target (from 13 per cent). Noting that UNDP was on track to attain its four-year management efficiency target of 7.33 per cent, and noting that meeting that target translated to increased programme delivery while decreasing institutional expenditures, the delegation encouraged UNDP to maintain its focus on the management efficient ratio. It sought clarity and details on the breakdown of costs UNDP incurred for United Nations development system coordination and the resident coordinator system, and whether the current percentage would remain the same going forward.

Annual review of the financial situation of UNCDF, 2020

28. A delegation underscored the unique UNCDF role in mobilizing financing for the least developed countries, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to climate change. It expressed strong support for increasing core resources to UNCDF and a healthier core/non-core resources ratio to ensure the Fund had the flexibility to fulfil its mandate and play its part in helping partners and countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The delegation welcomed the strong

UNCDF performance in innovative financing instruments, demonstrating how UNCDF remained fit-for-purpose, made efficient use of scarce resources, and leveraged domestic and international private capital for sustainable development in least developed countries. Noting the call for UNCDF to be ambitious in its strategic framework, 2020-2025, and to focus on its key comparative advantages in the United Nations system, including on financial inclusion, the delegation encouraged UNCDF to devise a plan that allowed and encouraged United Nations development system entities and other actors to partner with UNCDF and capitalize on its innovative financing capabilities to enhance the impact of the United Nations development system in least developed countries. The delegation welcomed the continuing and deepened dialogue with UNCDF on the funding of its next strategic framework, including a shift in emphasis from highly earmark to more regular, flexible resources.

29. In response, Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, welcomed the support expressed for more flexible and core funding which UNDP needed to reach its 30 per cent target. She said that UNDP planned to take a closer look at the funding model for United Nations development system coordination. UNDP had understood early on that the 1 per cent levy to fund the resident coordinator system would carry high administrative costs. To offset this situation, UNDP was and would continue to do its utmost to channel resources to programming.

30. In response to a query, the Chief Financial Officer, UNDP, highlighted that the high administrative costs of administering the 1 per cent levy for the resident coordinator system were largely a result of staff costs incurred when administering contributions received at headquarters, regional and country levels and then channelling them back to the United Nations Secretariat.

31. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/16 on the UNDP structured funding dialogue.

V. Country programmes and related matters

32. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, provided an overview of the country programme documents for Botswana, Cameroon, Comoros, Eritrea, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Albania, and Guatemala; the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Gambia, Montenegro, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, and the Sudan; the first, two-year extension of the country programme for Djibouti; and the second, one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon and Libya.

33. In turn, the regional directors for Africa, Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific, provided details from the regional perspective.

34. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Botswana ([DP/DCP/BWA/3](#)), Cameroon ([DP/DCP/CMR/4](#)), Comoros ([DP/DCP/COM/3](#)), Eritrea ([DP/DCP/ERI/4](#)), Madagascar ([DP/DCP/MDG/4](#)), Zimbabwe ([DP/DCP/ZWE/4](#)), Bangladesh ([DP/DCP/BGD/4](#)), Lao People's Democratic Republic ([DP/DCP/LAO/4](#)), Albania ([DP/DCP/ALB/3](#)) and Guatemala ([DP/DCP/GTM/4](#)).

35. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for The Gambia, Montenegro, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, and the Sudan, as approved by the Administrator, and presented in document [DP/2021/23](#).

36. The Executive Board approved the first, two-year extension of the country programme for Djibouti, and the second, one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon and Libya, as presented in document [DP/2021/23](#)

UNFPA segment

VI. UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025

37. In her opening remarks ([available on the UNFPA website](#)), the UNFPA Executive Director stressed that the new UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, ([DP/FPA/2021/8](#)) was ambitious, as called for by the urgency of the moment. It was important to accelerate progress towards the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action because recent events had shown how hard-won gains could be unwound in the face of crisis, with the COVID-19 pandemic taking a tremendous toll on women, girls, young people, and the most vulnerable communities. UNFPA had been focused on investing in health, family planning and education for a better future grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. UNFPA had been working hard to protect and promote sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, achieve gender equality, fight gender-based violence, and help countries close the data gaps for informed decision-making. In doing so, it contributed to global efforts to address emerging trends, including demographic shifts, migration, rising inequalities, and the threat of climate change. In recognition and response to those challenges, UNFPA created its new strategic plan. The accompanying annexes detail how UNFPA planned to monitor and report on progress, the theory of change that underpinned the plan, the revised business model, and the global and regional programmes that supported the work of UNFPA in pursuit of the strategic plan results. The Executive Board members and Member States helped to co-create the new strategic plan, which would be operationalized in line with national policies and the principle of national ownership through the UNFPA country programme documents.

38. The Executive Director said that despite notable gains progress was still far too slow to meet the 2030 Agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic remained a pervasive threat to sustainable development. The new strategic plan was a call to action to finish the work of the ICPD Programme of Action and achieve the three transformative results. The new plan built on the lessons of the previous strategic plan, 2018-2021, the voluntary national commitments made during the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ICPD, and the COVID-19 response. In the new plan, UNFPA would: (a) prioritize protecting and promoting human rights, focused on those furthest behind; (b) ramp up partnerships, including with the private sector, civil society organizations, international financial institutions and the media, and through South-South and triangular cooperation; (c) move from funding to financing for development; (d) step up efforts to transform unequal gender power structures and harmful social norms and engage men and boys more in that effort; (e) mainstream resilience-building and adaptation and ensure complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts, in line with its comparative advantages; and (f) strategically prioritize countries with the most urgent and, in some cases, unique needs.

39. The Executive Director underscored the Fund's commitment to United Nations reform as per the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review to ensure coherent, effective support to Member States. UNFPA would continue to work at all levels to enhance inter-agency collaboration and contribute its expertise for enhanced programmatic results. It was focused on joint accountability to ensure country programmes were derived from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. UNFPA would continue to work toward greater use of

common business operations for more efficient delivery of collective operational activities.

40. Internally, UNFPA continued to reinvigorate, reimagine and transform itself to become more agile, flexible and innovative while working to reduce its environmental footprint and broaden its partnerships to meet emerging demands, and in doing so, attract and retain high-calibre staff. Innovation and digitalization were the key accelerators of the three transformative results and in closing the digital gender gap. That included effectively and efficiently delivering high-quality supplies. The new Supply Chain Management Unit would help UNFPA to assume its leadership role in ensuring reproductive health commodity security. On the humanitarian front, UNFPA remained deeply engaged. It would continue to deliver its services in Afghanistan and defend the hard-won rights of Afghan women and girls, ensuring reproductive health services and supplies were accessible to all. UNFPA provided comparable humanitarian assistance in Haiti, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Lebanon and some 60 other countries with crises around the globe.

41. The Executive Director said UNFPA surpassed its resource targets for the previous four years. Still, the resources outlook for the remainder of 2021 was mixed. Reductions in official development assistance were hurting the UNFPA Supplies programme. Core resources projections for 2021-2022 were expected to be 2 per cent lower than in 2020. Though slightly reduced, co-financing continued to form the largest share of overall revenue; more than 40 per cent of which was earmarked for humanitarian action this year. The UNFPA Individual Giving Campaign was helping to catalyse financing, while consistent, predictable core contributions remained the paramount goal. UNFPA was determined to work with partners to close the financing gap and called on the Board for its support in encouraging Member States to increase their funding to UNFPA. The Executive Director stressed that UNFPA was committed to expanding open dialogue on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

42. Delegations commended UNFPA for the transparent and inclusive consultation process and dialogue with Board members and regional groups when developing the strategic plan, 2022-2025, which they said was detailed, comprehensive, ambitious and forward-looking. Board members strongly endorsed the new strategic plan and called on all members to follow suit. Delegations expressed support for the UNFPA transformation agenda to make it fit for purpose, agile, flexible and innovative in programme delivery and in leaving no one behind, and they supported UNFPA endeavours to expand its donor base and partnerships. They commended the Executive Director and UNFPA staff globally for their determination and progress in implementing the current strategic plan, 2018-2021, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

43. One delegation, speaking on behalf of the Bureau of the Board, expressed appreciation that UNFPA had reflected strategic lessons learned from the current strategic plan, 2018-2021, towards achieving the three transformative results, and encouraged UNFPA to continue drawing lessons from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the attainment of the three transformative results as it implemented the new strategic plan, 2022-2025. They called on UNFPA to continue implementing the audit recommendations and the recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Audit and Budgetary Questions while strengthening its internal controls and oversight capacity.

44. A group of four delegations strongly welcomed the rights-based foundation of the new strategic plan and stressed that the UNFPA mandate came with a responsibility to advance human rights granted to all women and girls, in particular their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and they strongly supported the

UNFPA intention to strengthen its normative work in all countries where it was present. The group expressed support for the organization's differentiated approach to prioritize support for countries that were lagging the most in achieving the three transformative results. They stressed that the three transformative results could not be achieved without effective humanitarian interventions and that UNFPA was well-positioned to bridge the gap between development and humanitarian action. They therefore supported increased investment in the UNFPA humanitarian response capacity.

45. A cross-regional group of delegations stressed that the strategic plan was an agency-owned document and that while it might not fully capture all concerns and priorities of the various Member States, it nevertheless served as a global framework that would enable UNFPA to best fulfil its mandate and support countries in delivering on their national development needs and priorities. The group strongly encouraged UNFPA to work in close cooperation with the other United Nations development system organizations to align its programming with the Cooperation Frameworks, in close consultation with Governments, to adequately respond to national needs and priorities.

46. Another group of delegations commended UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women for identifying areas of joint engagement and for aligning their respective contributions to results achieved collectively, thereby making connections and complementarities visible and measurable, and contributing to a stronger, more effective United Nations development system. The group called on the four organizations to leverage their comparative advantages for coordinated and effective system-wide collaboration through their agency-specific contributions to meet programme countries' needs under the effective coordination and leadership of the resident coordinator to achieve collective results more effectively and efficiently. They expected the four organizations, in light of their common and complementary indicators, to monitor and report on results achieved collectively, particularly in building capacities and creating enabling environments to achieve long-term development results from a system-wide perspective, based on the understanding of leveraging comparative advantages for greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness. The group called on the four organizations to use the midterm review of their strategic plans to take stock of and adjust partnership modalities and agency-specific contributions in areas of joint engagement.

47. In other interventions, delegations stressed that in the new strategic plan UNFPA should prioritize the critical aspects of the ICPD Programme of Action, such as women and children living in extreme poverty, strategies for resilience, sustainable development, literacy and education, ensuring the right to access to reproductive health care services, improving maternal health, and reducing preventable maternal death. There was concern with the use of several non-consensual terms in the new strategic plan. Delegations underscored the importance of multilateralism and fully demonstrating the spirit of solidarity and cooperation, in jointly supporting the United Nations development system organizations to better adapt to the new situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

48. Other delegations welcomed the UNFPA lifecycle approach, which corresponded to demographic trends within countries. They acknowledged the importance of considering migration, asylum, refugees and displacement among the seven factors in leaving no one behind. They appreciated the new strategic plan's shift to include mental health issues, digitalization, climate change, demographic developments and provision of high-quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services as part of universal health coverage. It was stressed that health, including sexual and reproductive health, was a human right, and that the realization of universal health coverage was essential to protect the health of all

people and ensure human security. There were calls for universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. A delegation called on UNFPA to continue to address population development, taking into account cultural and demographic changes, including declining birth rates and aging populations. They welcomed the plan to advance UNFPA humanitarian action and expand its humanitarian response, including positioning UNFPA as the lead gender-based violence coordinating agency and champion for the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. They recognized the essential role of UNFPA supplies in humanitarian settings in protecting the most vulnerable.

49. In response, the UNFPA Executive Director said its new People Strategy would help UNFPA develop talent, build ladders for staff to advance and help retain staff. The Division of Human Resources would invite personnel to provide input and suggestions on how to function in the new working environment demanded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout that effort, UNFPA would remain a champion of diversity as it enhanced its field support and programmes in fragile contexts in light of COVID-19 disruptions so that it could continue to ensure ‘last-mile’ delivery of services and equitable distribution of essential sexual and reproductive health medicines, including through better forecasting. United Nations reforms were a major asset in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, and key in helping UNFPA remain ambitious in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNFPA actively engaged with United Nations development system organizations to develop common indicators fully aligned with the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. This would help UNFPA capture and publicize results, give visibility and advocate for its work, and thereby help it to expand its donor base.

50. The Executive Director said the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, was the framework for overall programming and gave UNFPA the flexibility to work under the guidance of national priorities. The new plan aimed to reflect the diverse needs and priorities of the Board membership. While it did not constitute agreed language, the new strategic plan’s operational parameters would always align with the principles of national ownership and be reflected in country programme documents as nationally determined and agreed. Ensuring ‘no one is left behind’ was central to the new plan and reflected a demographic population dynamic mega-trend that the Secretary-General identified as one of the big potential leverage points towards the 2030 Agenda. The three transformative results provided a clear focus, helped identify vulnerable populations and allowed UNFPA to work with them based on their needs. Similarly, investing in disaggregated data revealed those in danger of being left behind and helped UNFPA pre-position its services and supplies to be on the ground quickly and when needed. Further, its work to strengthen national early warning systems helped UNFPA, together with partners, to address the disproportionate impact of disparities on women, girls and vulnerable populations. From the perspective of climate change, the new strategic plan included a value proposition to address the climate impact on women, girls and young people and sexual and reproductive health, ultimately to build resilient health systems working closely with local communities in developing early warning and early action and with other United Nations organizations on adaptation. UNFPA would actively engage in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (COP 26) and the Doha Development Round to mainstream gender and sexual and reproductive health perspectives.

51. The Executive Director noted that UNFPA pursued a flexible, tailored approach to its engagements with countries. It worked in high-fertility settings providing sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights services and supplies, helping countries to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend. It also assisted countries with ageing societies. To address ageing demographics, regional offices were leading

robust programming in support of older persons. That included the 2016 launch of low-fertility programmes and, in 2020, the opening of a dedicated office in Seoul for its global programme on aging and low fertility, in partnership with the World Health Organization and other United Nations entities, as part of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Aging, 2021-2030. In all its areas of work, UNFPA remained committed to delivering in quantifiable ways; it endorsed a 'zero tolerance' to all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. During its Inter-agency Committee Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, UNFPA had increased the intensity of engagement in countries to lay out its strategic vision for ending sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

52. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/17 on the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025.

53. After the adoption of decision 2021/17, one delegation strongly stated the position that it did not consider the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, a negotiated document as it contained a number of non-internationally agreed terms. The delegation stressed that its agreeing to adopt the decision on item 6 did not imply its acceptance of the terms contained in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, which it said were not internationally agreed and not in conformity with its national laws and regulations.

VII. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

54. The UNFPA Executive Director presented the integrated budget, 2022-2025, (DP/FPA/2021/9) and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025 (DP/FPA/2021/12). In her remarks, she noted the new integrated budget was fully aligned with the UNFPA strategic focus on achieving the three transformative results by 2030 and was based on high-quality population data and evidence. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the integrated budget was marked by considerable uncertainty about factors affecting the Fund's work. Mindful of that challenge, UNFPA endeavoured to set the strategic course for four years while staying nimble and realizing that course corrections might be necessary. As a result, the conservative income projections underlying the integrated budget were deliberately prudent while reflecting the ambitions of the new strategic plan. Those projections took into account the announcement of funding reductions by one major donor, as well as the re-engagement of another major donor. UNFPA was actively working to attract contributions in several areas, including United Nations pooled funds, financing from international financial institutions, such as multilateral development banks and the private sector.

55. The Executive Director said that the lion's share of integrated budget resources would be allocated to programmes in support of the achievement of the strategic plan outcomes and outputs. The gross institutional budget was proposed at \$839.9 million. While this was an increase compared to the mid-term review institutional budget of \$756.2 million, the proportion of total resources utilized for the institutional budget would decrease from 17.7 to 16.2 per cent, hence making more resources available for programmes. Key strategic investment areas included field leadership and operational support, investments in the Individual Giving programme, strengthened and decentralized human resources management, corporate partnerships and resource mobilization, and continued investments in the independent oversight functions. The institutional budget anticipated reductions over four years, stemming from the information and communications technology transformation project, cost classification realignments, and operating efficiencies, among others. The integrated

budget envisaged 88 per cent of total resources would be spent in the field during 2022-2025. The Executive Director thanked the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions for its report, and noted that most of the recommended reporting already took place, albeit in separate documents to the Executive Board. She appealed to Board members to bring to fruition the ambitions of the new strategic plan, as reflected in the integrated budget. She encouraged all partners to contribute multi-year core funding, the only fully flexible and responsive funding mechanism available to UNFPA.

56. In the sole intervention, a delegation supported the UNFPA planned resource allocations and its appeal for increased voluntary contributions to regular resources. The delegation sought clarity on how UNFPA calculated the 5 per cent increase in the allocation for United Nations development system coordination activities and inquired on the potential future cost savings from United Nations reform, which were not included in the integrated budget.

57. In response, the UNFPA Executive Director explained how UNFPA had devised income projections over the strategic plan period, 2022-2025, and increased the amount relative to the midterm review of the strategic plan, 2018-2021. UNFPA income projections for 2022-2025 did register an increase, compared to 2018-2021, but showed a slight decrease of 0.3 per cent, compared to actual levels for 2018-2021. In terms of actual contributions, therefore, UNFPA did not project growth in contributions for 2022-2025. While the pandemic and the budget cuts by Member States weighed negatively, UNFPA remained committed to attracting funding from a range of new sources. She stressed that in the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNFPA sought to be ambitious while saving costs and being prudent, given the uncertainties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing economic crisis, and the effects of funding cuts. In that context, UNFPA placed a high priority on investing in staff capacities to serve, including in humanitarian settings, through its People Strategy, partnerships, relationship-building and data-driven learning.

58. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/18 on the UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025.

VIII. Structured funding dialogue

59. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) presented the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2020-2021 ([DP/FPA/2021/10](#)), which was followed by a detailed presentation by the Chief, UNFPA Resource Mobilization Branch, focused on the resources needed to achieve the three transformative results as part of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025.

60. In the sole intervention, a delegation welcomed the improved format and harmonized approach UNFPA had taken in reporting on the structured funding dialogue. It noted the Fund's overall success in meeting the structured funding dialogue objectives and targets but expressed concern with the overall trend of declining core contributions within the United Nations system and the decline in contributors to regular resources. The delegation encouraged UNFPA to maintain its efforts to attract core resources. It also commended the Fund's positioning to leverage full support of its existing funding architecture to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraged UNFPA to continue those efforts. The delegation expressed appreciation for its use of flexible funding modalities to mobilize timely humanitarian action at the outset of crises and in underfunded emergency responses.

61. In response, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) highlighted the Fund's ongoing concern with the levels of core funding, including the sharp reduction in donors to regular resources. UNFPA was actively engaged with Member States and a diverse range of partners to attract and broaden its funding base.

62. The Chief, UNFPA Resource Mobilization Branch, said UNFPA was focused on communicating with Member States and all partners the importance of core funding and the unique impact of core resources in achieving results on the ground.

63. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/19 on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue.

IX. Country programmes and related matters

64. In her statement to the Board, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) gave an overview of the country programme documents for Albania, Bangladesh, Botswana, Comoros, Guatemala, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar and Zimbabwe; the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Gambia, Iran, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Sudan; and the second one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon, Libya, Tajikistan and Zambia.

65. In turn, the regional directors for Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, East and Southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided details from a regional perspective.

66. The Executive Board approved, per its decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Albania ([DP/FPA/CPD/ALB/5](#)); Bangladesh ([DP/FPA/CPD/BGD/10](#)); Botswana ([DP/FPA/CPD/BWA/7](#)); Comoros ([DP/FPA/CPD/COM/7](#)); Guatemala ([DP/FPA/CPD/GTM/8](#)); the Lao People's Democratic Republic ([DP/FPA/CPD/LAO/7](#)); Madagascar ([DP/FPA/CPD/MDG/8](#)); and Zimbabwe ([DP/FPA/CPD/ZWE/8](#)).

67. The Executive Board approved the second one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon, Libya, Tajikistan and Zambia, and took note of the first one-year extensions, approved by the UNFPA Executive Director, of the country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Gambia, Iran, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Sudan, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/11](#).

UNOPS segment

X. UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025

XI. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

68. In her opening remarks ([available on the UNOPS website](#)), the UNOPS Executive Director said the new UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, responded to the urgent need for new approaches, renewed ambition, and robust action to address the immense scale of needs and demands of the moment. The new plan set out UNOPS ambitions to help build a better future and support national priorities to deliver at scale on the Sustainable Development Goals. UNOPS work, she stressed, was based on partnerships and UNOPS was intent on building on its successes to date to refine the quality of its services. She drew attention to UNOPS work on the COVID-19

pandemic, the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, the importance of quality infrastructure, public procurement, the Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3i) initiative, its organizational priorities, and its business model.

69. The Executive Director paid homage to the eight UNOPS colleagues who had lost their lives due to COVID-19. She commended UNOPS staff across the globe who continued to work in extreme and unpredictable situations to assist countries and communities – delivering vital health infrastructure and strengthening health systems, procuring medical supplies and equipment, and supporting vaccination roll-out. UNOPS was determined to redouble its efforts to tackle the pandemic and the inequalities it had exacerbated. The new strategic plan, she said, was the blueprint for action and was firmly rooted in UNOPS mandate, the current global context, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That included lessons from the COVID-19 and climate change emergencies. It focused on how UNOPS could better support national priorities and further strengthen national capacities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including by bridging the financing gap and reducing inequalities. Three areas were at the core of the new strategic plan: quality infrastructure, improved public procurement, and the S3i initiative.

70. The Executive Director said that infrastructure offered vast possibilities. It helped countries get back on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and accelerate pandemic recovery. In the face of the climate emergency, more than ever infrastructure had to be sustainable, resilient and inclusive. She highlighted UNOPS collaborative research with the University of Oxford and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the influence of infrastructure in addressing climate change and in achieving the Paris Climate Agreement. Scale was key for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and public procurement played a vital role by accelerating the shift to low-carbon economies, recovering from the pandemic's socioeconomic impact, tackling corruption and reducing inequality. UNOPS worked to support national and local institutions to tackle corruption, build better public services and accelerate progress towards the Goals at scale while saving millions of dollars, which could in turn be invested in national priorities. She stressed that increasing private sector investment was crucial in bringing initiatives to scale, a challenge the S3i initiative took on. By facilitating public and private finance to large scale infrastructure projects and making UNOPS seed investments where necessary, S3i helped address critical national needs in affordable housing, renewable energy and health.

71. The Executive Director said that throughout its work UNOPS was committed to human rights, gender equality, diversity, inclusion and the most vulnerable. She highlighted that UNOPS has achieved gender parity internally and was committed to broadening its approach to expand diversity and inclusion. And to bolster its self-financing business model, the new strategic plan would continue to focus on digitalization to ensure systems and processes were optimized and fit-for-purpose. It would drive efficiencies and transparency while UNOPS continued to prudently manage its finances, in accordance with the recent Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) review of UNOPS.

72. Overall, Board members strongly endorsed the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, and expressed appreciation for the extensive consultations organized with Member States during its preparation. They recognized that the new plan was fully aligned with the 2020 quadrennial review and broader United Nations reform efforts. They reiterated their support for UNOPS unique self-financing, demand-driven business model; mandate in climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable procurement, and project management; and ability to address unexpected challenges such as COVID-19 through innovation. They recognized UNOPS readiness and ability to work and reach the most vulnerable and unreachable in remote areas and fragile settings. They

expressed their continuing support for UNOPS private sector collaboration and public-private partnerships as drivers for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and welcomed the continued rise in demand for UNOPS services.

73. A delegation, speaking on behalf of the Bureau of the Board, welcomed and strongly endorsed the new strategic plan, 2022-2025, which embodied the ambition and drive with which UNOPS delivered on its mandate to expand the capacity of countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through its unique self-financing, demand-driven business model. They underscored UNOPS important contribution in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed appreciation for UNOPS attention to the needs of vulnerable groups and the specific issues facing middle-income countries. The group welcomed the new strategic plan's focus on quality infrastructure and public procurement, enhancing infrastructure investments, particularly in the digital realm as essential for sustainable, resilient recovery. They stressed that UNOPS needed to ensure its infrastructure projects adhered to the highest international norms and standards and they expressed support for UNOPS continued pursuit of quality and innovation in its work and efforts at realizing efficiency gains, including through joint procurement.

74. A cross-regional group of delegations welcomed and strongly endorsed the new strategic plan, 2022-2025. They recognized that the new strategic plan was an agency-owned document that did not fully capture all concerns and priorities of the various Member States. They nevertheless stressed that the plan served as a global framework that would enable UNOPS to best fulfil its mandate and support countries in delivering on their national development needs and priorities. The group strongly encouraged UNOPS to work in close cooperation with United Nations organizations to align programming with the country-specific Cooperation Frameworks, in close consultation with national Governments, to adequately respond to country needs and priorities. They stressed the need to develop new approaches to overcome current and future obstacles to achieving the 2030 Agenda and building back better.

75. In other interventions, delegations drew attention to UNOPS response and recovery work and efforts to build resilience to climate change, while underscoring the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation. They expected UNOPS to continue to work with the COVAX facility to help countries procure medical supplies, promote investments in health infrastructure, and strengthen health care systems. In that effort, UNOPS should continue to strengthen its cooperation with Member States, United Nations organizations and other partners. They called on UNOPS to continue to respond to the growing demand to help vulnerable and least developed countries strengthen quality infrastructure, financing and procurement, especially in education, health and digitalization, as well as in ensuring fair, equitable, transparent public procurement. They welcomed and sought details on UNOPS evidence-based approach to infrastructure and its plans to shift from direct support to capacity strengthening. They encouraged UNOPS to continue to mainstream gender in its investment decisions so that women and girls could reap the benefits. They drew attention to UNOPS work in affordable housing, including in densely populated urban areas, and in renewable energy through its S3i initiative and its channelling of private and public sector investments in social and environmental impact projects and in job creation for youth.

76. Other delegations highlighted the transformational impact of UNOPS work that put countries in a better position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Noting that the new strategic plan responded to the anticipated rise in demand for UNOPS services, they called on UNOPS to explore ways to rapidly systematize climate screening and climate-friendly approaches and accelerate incorporation of critical social safeguards in all its work, including against sexual exploitation and abuse. They emphasized the importance of the social, environmental, human rights

and gender dimensions, which they said should not be seen as implementation indicators but as policy priorities. They welcomed and underscored the centrality of United Nations development system reform in the new strategic plan and the need for UNOPS to continue to engage with United Nations entities to ensure reform implementation, including through a division of labour on the ground, which would optimize UNOPS work on infrastructure. They strongly encouraged increased synergies and cooperation between United Nations organizations to implement a solid One-UN approach to ensure an efficient, effective collective response. They welcomed the recent MOPAN assessment of UNOPS and expected UNOPS response to include plans to address areas identified for improvement.

77. In response, the UNOPS Executive Director underscored UNOPS commitment to aligning all its work with nationally defined priorities and needs according to the principles of national ownership. UNOPS was also committed to United Nations development system reform and working closely with other United Nations organizations at the regional and country levels based on its comparative advantages and value-added. UNOPS was deeply engaged with United Nations development system mechanisms to better align inter-agency work and expand standardized approaches. She said the experience of flexible delivery and innovation approaches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had fed into the new strategic plan, 2022-2025. In developing the new plan, UNOPS was guided by the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. UNOPS developed the three pillars of its new strategic plan with the aim of ensuring greater impact and continued high quality services in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. That included placing social and environmental dimensions, including on gender and gender parity, at the heart of the new plan. The Executive Director said that while it had embarked on an ambitious programme to report on climate and social indicators transparently through the Global Reporting Initiative, UNOPS was committed to a deeper analysis showing its 'green' approach to quality infrastructure and its health and safety initiative to ensure safe project sites. UNOPS was prepared to work with Member States to address the recommendations of the MOPAN assessment.

78. The Director, Implementation Practices and Standards, UNOPS, said UNOPS was working with the United Nations system to capitalize on each organization's comparative advantages in advancing the delivery of sustainable resilience and infrastructure. Examples included UNOPS partnering with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on important aspects of infrastructure asset management to improve the quality of infrastructure and services from design to decommissioning. Another was UNOPS work supporting climate resilience in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the University of Oxford. Such activities allowed UNOPS to design tangible projects, explore potential investments and help partners identify funding opportunities through sustainable infrastructure financing that in turn helped finance infrastructure investments that were resilient, sustainable and inclusive. He said the UNOPS evidence-based approach to infrastructure development relied on data and fact-based planning to inform decision-making by considering climate change and potential shocks to infrastructure with the understanding that infrastructure operated in the context of society, economy and environment. UNOPS prioritized an inclusive approach to decision-making that relied not only on engineers and finances but also gender, diversity and environmental experts and most importantly the community and people UNOPS served. It was aligned to long-term national infrastructure plans, anchored within the nationally determined development vision, so that Governments could efficiently use existing assets or prioritize new projects and effectively use scarce, financial resources to deliver maximum social economic benefits to communities and people.

79. The Chief Executive, UNOPS Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3i) Initiative, stressed that quality was paramount in the three pillars of UNOPS work: affordable housing, renewable energy, and health infrastructure. When identifying partners, UNOPS focused first and foremost on quality in all aspects of its work, which was central to its commitment to Governments and to the communities and people it served.

80. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/20 on the UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025.

81. The Executive Board adopted decision 2021/21 on the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2022-2023 and annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2020.

I. Organizational matters (continued)

82. Following the adoption of decisions, delegations reiterated their appreciation for the well-organized, constructive consultation process in the run-up to the formal presentations of the three organizations' strategic plans, 2022-2025.

83. A delegation encouraged Member States to practice flexibility during decision negotiations to facilitate consensus. It also requested that the Board revisit the planning of informal meetings to foster efficiency, allow time for adequate discussions, and also consider workloads of delegations. The delegation inquired about the selection process for decision facilitators, encouraged equitable geographical distribution, and stressed the importance of transparency.

84. In response, the Deputy Secretary of the Board said that session work plans were guided by the standing agenda items as mandated by the Board and its relevant decisions as well as by its rules of procedure. Consultations and briefings were determined by the formal agenda items, with each item typically accompanied by an informal consultation in advance of the formal session of the Board. Board members and observers could also request briefings on topics of interest. The Bureau of the Board reviewed the list of informal consultations and briefings, after which they were circulated to the Board and observers and posted on the Executive Board Secretariat website.

85. The President of the Executive Board clarified that facilitators were nominated by the regional groups of the Board. She emphasized that all efforts were always made to ensure equitable geographic representation of facilitators, including a concerted push for equal regional distribution for the second regular session 2021. She highlighted that the process in developing the strategic plans, 2022-2025, was lengthy and benefitted from over 68 informal consultations, 20 of which were dedicated to strategic plan discussions, without counting the regional consultations and decision negotiations. She stressed that the consensual adoption of decisions on the strategic plans at the session was proof there was more that united than divided Member States.

Annex I

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2021/1

Reports of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2019

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the unqualified audit opinions on UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors for 2019;
2. *Calls upon* UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS to harmonize further their reporting formats on the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations, including, where possible, the time frames for their detailed reporting and the categorization of recommendations into those that are priority, and any other priorities;

With regard to UNDP:

3. *Notes* the progress made by UNDP in addressing the top seven audit-related priorities in 2018-2019;
4. *Endorses* the suggested top seven audit-related management priorities for the biennium 2020-2021;
5. *Acknowledges* the progress achieved by UNDP in the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2019, strongly encourages UNDP to continue implementing the recommendations, as well as the remaining recommendations from prior years, for closure, and requests UNDP to include the impacts of implemented recommendations, including on organizational culture, in its reporting on audit recommendations;
6. *Takes note* of the observations by the Boards of Auditors relating to fraud risk management, and encourages UNDP to continue with its organization-specific anti-fraud strategy and advance the implementation of the fraud risk management action plan;
7. *Encourages* UNDP to coordinate its actions in response to the Board of Auditors recommendations with its actions to address the Office of Audit and Investigations audit entitled “Performance Audit of UNDP Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Management”;

With regard to UNCDF:

8. *Supports* the ongoing efforts of UNCDF in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2019;

With regard to UNFPA:

9. *Acknowledges* the progress achieved by UNFPA in the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the financial period ended on 31 December 2019, welcomes the further measures planned by the organization, and strongly encourages UNFPA to continue implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors from prior years for closure;
10. *Looks forward to* the UNFPA enterprise risk management policy in 2021 and to the enterprise resource planning system in 2022 to support the implementation and closing of outstanding recommendations;

With regard to UNOPS:

11. *Acknowledges* the progress UNOPS has achieved in the implementation of recommendations of the Board of Auditors made for the year ended 31 December 2019, encourages UNOPS to continue their efforts in implementing the recommendations, and looks forward to the next report on implementation.

4 February 2021

2021/2 UNDP evaluation

The Executive Board

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP support to climate change adaptation (DP/2021/6), and management response thereto (DP/2021/7):

1. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP support to climate change adaptation and the management response thereto;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the evaluation's findings and conclusions acknowledging the significant role and contribution of UNDP in supporting countries in their climate change adaptation efforts, while noting areas for further strengthening and acceleration;
3. *Requests* UNDP to accelerate its attention to climate risks across its development portfolio, reduce fragmentation across its climate change adaptation programming through continued investments in integrated and programmatic approaches, and expand its adaptation support in small island developing States;
4. *Further requests* UNDP to consider the evaluation recommendations relating to the need to strengthen capacities in disaster risk reduction (DRR) for adaptation, including through its forthcoming resilient recovery offer under DRR, which will integrate sustainable adaptive considerations, linked to the UNDP climate change adaptation offer, scale up innovative approaches for private sector engagement and strengthening gender equality in its policy and capacity-related support in adaptation-related programming;

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries (DP/2021/8) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/9):

5. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries and the management response thereto;
6. *Takes note* of the evaluation's findings and conclusions acknowledging, among others, the contribution of UNDP to sustainable development, governance and peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries, while noting areas for further strengthening;
7. *Welcomes* the commitment of UNDP to strengthen partnerships within and outside of the United Nations system, as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning of programmes;
8. *Recognizes* the UNDP contribution to conflict prevention, encourages UNDP to enhance its support to conflict prevention through its development work, and in this regard recalls decision 2017/30;
9. *Encourages* UNDP to continue to ensure that its programming efforts are risk-informed and anchored locally, in particular in conflict-affected countries;
10. *Takes note* of the forthcoming development by UNDP of a 'framework for crisis and fragility', taking into account the evaluation findings and management response, and requests UNDP to provide the Executive Board with an oral update on the implementation of the evaluation's recommendations and management response;
11. *Requests* that UNDP further clarify and communicate responsibilities between the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Bureau and regional bureaux to prevent overlap and ensure clarity, consistency and complementarity at global, regional and country levels;

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach (DP/2021/10) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/11):

12. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach, and the management response thereto;
13. *Takes note with appreciation* of the evaluation's findings and conclusions regarding UNDP efforts to bring a resilience approach to the Syrian refugee crisis response, as well as the reinforced partnership between UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in support to refugees and host communities;
14. *Takes note* that UNDP will, in consultation with UNHCR and other relevant partners, review and identify strategic directions to improve and update the 3RP response and coordination mechanisms in full respect of the obligation to ensure a safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees;
15. *Encourages* UNDP, in line with the evaluation's findings, to provide thought leadership as well as practical programme solutions to contribute to stronger intra- and inter-agency cooperation, coherence, coordination and complementarity in the delivery of United Nations operations at country level;
16. *Requests* UNDP to take measures to address challenges noted in the evaluation with regard to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

4 February 2021

2021/3

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session 2021

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its first regular session 2021, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Elected on 7 December 2020 the following members of the Bureau for 2021:

President: H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria)
 Vice-President: H.E. Ms. Yoka Brandt (The Netherlands)
 Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Lang Yabou (The Gambia)
 Vice-President: H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh)

Adopted the agenda (DP/2021/L.1 and Corr.1) and approved the workplan for its first regular session 2021;

Approved the report of the second regular session 2020 (DP/2021/1);

Adopted the annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2021 (DP/2021/CRP.1);

Approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2021;

Agreed to the following schedule for the remaining sessions of the Executive Board in 2021:

Annual session: 7 to 11 June 2021
 Second regular session: 30 August to 3 September 2021.

Joint segment

Item 2

Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

Adopted decision 2021/1 on the recommendations of the Board of Auditors reports of UNDP ([DP/2021/3](#)), UNCDF ([DP/2021/4](#)), UNFPA ([DP/FPA/2021/1](#)) and UNOPS ([DP/OPS/2021/1](#)) on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2019;

Item 3

Follow-up to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting

Took note of the joint UNDP/UNFPA report on the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board ([DP-FPA/2021/1](#));

UNDP segment

Item 4

Human Development Report

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

Item 5

UNDP country programmes and related matters

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

Africa: Côte d'Ivoire; ([DP/DCP/CIV/3](#))

Asia-Pacific: China ([DP/DCP/CHN/5](#));

Arab States: Somalia ([DP/DCP/SOM/4](#)), Tunisia ([DP/DCP/TUN/3](#));

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Azerbaijan ([DP/DCP/AZE/5](#)), Georgia ([DP/DCP/GEO/4](#)); North Macedonia ([DP/DCP/MKD/4](#)); Uzbekistan ([DP/DCP/UZB/4](#));

Latin America and the Caribbean: Mexico ([DP/DCP/MEX/3](#)), Panama ([DP/DCP/PAN/4](#)); Uruguay ([DP/DCP/URY/4](#));

Approved the second six-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar, ([DP/2021/5](#));

Approved the second one-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan ([DP/2021/5](#));

Approved the fourth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic and the fifth extension of the country programme for Yemen ([DP/2021/5](#) and [Add.1](#));

Approved the second one-year extension of the country programme for Tajikistan ([DP/2021/5](#));

Approved the second one-year extensions of the country programmes for Guatemala and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ([DP/2021/5](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Argentina, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Maldives, and the first six-month extension of the country programme for Armenia, already approved by the Administrator ([DP/2021/5](#) and [Add.2](#));

Item 6
UNDP evaluation

Adopted decision 2021/2 on the evaluation of UNDP support to climate change adaptation (DP/2021/6) and the management response (DP/2021/7); the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries (DP/2021/8) and the management response (DP/2021/9); and the evaluation of UNDP support to the Syrian refugee crisis response and promoting an integrated resilience approach (DP/2021/10) and the management response (DP/2021/11);

UNFPA segment

Item 7
UNFPA evaluation

Took note of the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South and triangular cooperation, (DP/FPA/2021/CRP.1) and the management response to the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South and triangular cooperation (DP/FPA/2021/CRP.2).

Item 8
Country programmes and related matters

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

Azerbaijan (DP/FPA/CPD/AZE/5), China (DP/FPA/CPD/CHN/9), Côte d'Ivoire (DP/FPA/CPD/CIV/8), Eswatini (DP/FPA/CPD/SWZ/7), Georgia (DP/FPA/CPD/GEO/4), North Macedonia (DP/FPA/CPD/MKD/2), Panama (DP/FPA/CPD/PAN/4), Somalia (DP/FPA/CPD/SOM/4), Tunisia (DP/FPA/CPD/TUN/10), Uganda (DP/FPA/CPD/UGA/9), Uruguay (DP/FPA/CPD/URY/4) and Uzbekistan (DP/FPA/CPD/UZB/5);

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives and United Republic of Tanzania (DP/FPA/2021/2), and the first six-month extension of the country programme for Armenia (DP/FPA/2021/2/Add.1);

Approved the second one-year extensions for the country programmes for Guatemala and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the fourth, six-month extension for the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic (DP/FPA/2021/2);

UNOPS segment

Item 9
United Nations Office for Project Services

Heard the Director of Regional Portfolios give a statement on behalf of the UNOPS Executive Director;

Item 10
Other matters

Heard an address by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council.

4 February 2021

2021/4**Cumulative review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and annual report of the Administrator for 2020***The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the cumulative review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and annual report of the Administrator for 2020 (DP/2021/16) and its annexes, the report of UNDP on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2020 (DP/2021/16/Add.1) and its annexes, and the statistical annex (DP/2021/16/Add.2);
2. *Commends* the rapid local and global support of UNDP to programme countries in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including as the technical lead for the implementation of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19, and welcomes the inclusion of new reporting measures, harmonized with the United Nations development system, to capture results related to the response to the pandemic;
3. *Takes note* of the continued progress made by UNDP against its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, building on learning from the midterm review and recognizing that UNDP achieved its second-highest programme delivery rate in six years in 2020;
4. *Encourages* UNDP to continue to accelerate progress in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, drawing on the agile measures put in place in response to the pandemic, and to draw upon the lessons from this experience in designing the Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025;
5. *Welcomes* the strong commitment of UNDP to delivering integrated, systemic support to countries to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals as part of a reformed United Nations development system, and encourages UNDP to continue to work closely with United Nations agencies to support countries' efforts through the common objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks;
6. *Recognizes* the thirtieth anniversary of the Human Development Report and Human Development Index and encourages UNDP to continue its efforts to pioneer data-driven, inclusive and sustainable ways of measuring human development progress.

11 June 2021

2021/5**UNDP evaluation***The Executive Board*

With regard to the annual report on evaluation, 2020 (DP/2021/19) and the management commentaries thereto:

1. *Takes note of* the annual report on evaluation (DP/2021/19) and the management commentaries thereto, welcomes the additional analysis provided on key findings and lessons from evaluations carried out in 2020 and requests UNDP to address the issues raised;
2. *Recognizes* the expanded efforts of the Independent Evaluation Office to work with UNDP country offices to improve the quality and coverage of decentralized evaluations, and acknowledges the efforts of UNDP to work with the Independent Evaluation Office to improve decentralized evaluations, encourages UNDP to continue this effort to identify and build evaluation capacities and resources to increase the satisfactory rating of decentralized evaluations significantly;

3. *Recognizes* the promising new Global Evaluation Initiative that the Independent Evaluation Office has launched with the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group and other partners, to foster a global evaluation culture and support the efforts of Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen government monitoring and evaluation frameworks and capacities;

4. *Takes note* of the quality of recommendations from the Independent Evaluation Office as well as progress achieved in the implementation of management actions arising from evaluation findings and recommendations, and encourages UNDP to continue taking further actions to address overdue recommendations and to implement future evaluation recommendations consistently and in a timely manner;

With regard to the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 (DP/2021/20) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/21):

5. *Takes note* of the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 (DP/2021/20) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/21);

6. *Commends* UNDP for its ability to adapt to the extraordinary circumstances of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, demonstrating agility in its pivot of country programming to help countries respond and plan for recovery;

7. *Recognizes* the concerted efforts of UNDP to promote integrated development solutions and collaborative partnerships to support and leverage financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, while mainstreaming the principle of leaving no one behind;

8. *Takes note of* the commitment of UNDP to further articulate how it will expand and achieve the concrete benefits of integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a catalytic development accelerator for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

9. *Acknowledges* the progress made by UNDP to become more client-oriented through streamlining of processes and investing in digital transformation and innovation;

10. *Recognizes* that the transformations envisioned in the 2030 Agenda and the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 require more predictable and flexible funding, and notes a stable influx of other resources and increases in regular resources, as well as the agile mobilization and repurposing of funds by UNDP to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and encourages UNDP to continue to build on progress, to improve its operational and administrative systems and practices, including agility and flexibility for adaptive management and funding, and to continue its efforts to expand and diversify programme funding sources and advocate for flexible and predictable funding;

11. *Requests* UNDP to better define its role and value proposition in support of the 2030 Agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic response, ensuring that its aim to build forward better pays due consideration to the principles of inclusiveness and sustainability;

12. *Encourages* UNDP to design its Integrated Results and Resources Framework in line with applicable guidance of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) and requests UNDP to harmonize, where appropriate, its Integrated Results and Resources Framework with other United Nations entities, with a focus on all results levels, and maximize the use of common results indicators, all with the goal of advancing United Nations development system contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals and to further strengthen system-wide evaluation;

13. *Requests* UNDP to provide in a timely manner, ahead of the second regular session of 2021, more-detailed information on the Integrated Results and Resources Framework, including on its relationship to the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework;

14. *Encourages* UNDP to continue to improve results-based management and to design its results monitoring and reporting framework and systems to support the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, so as to provide timely and relevant data, methods and indicators to help countries accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and monitor UNDP progress in this regard;

15. *Requests* UNDP to take into account, as appropriate, the recommendations of all relevant evaluations when formulating the next Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025 and related regional programmes;

With regard to the third joint Global Environment Facility-UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme (DP/2021/22) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/23):

16. *Takes note* of the third joint Global Environment Facility (GEF)—UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme (DP/2021/22) and the management response thereto (DP/2021/23);

17. *Takes note* of the evaluation's findings and conclusions acknowledging the significant role and contribution of UNDP in implementing the Small Grants Programme, a GEF corporate programme that contributes to global environmental and socioeconomic benefits in 126 countries, while noting areas for further strengthening;

18. *Requests* UNDP to collaborate closely with the GEF, providing support and inputs to a consultative process to develop an updated long-term vision for the Small Grants Programme and to review the programme's "upgrading policy";

19. *Requests* UNDP to collaborate closely with the GEF to strengthen the multi-stakeholder governance of the Small Grants Programme through its global and national steering committees;

20. *Further requests* UNDP to improve and incentivize innovation and business-oriented approaches at the project and country levels, and to promote better synergies between UNDP country offices and the Small Grants Programme, to ensure the sustainability of results, capacities and goodwill.

11 June 2021

2021/6

Report on results achieved by the United Nations Capital Development Fund in 2020

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report on results achieved by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in 2020 (DP/2021/24);

2. *Commends* UNCDF for the progress made in implementing its Strategic Framework, 2018-2021;

3. *Welcomes* its commitment to and role in delivering innovative and blended financing approaches to leave no one behind;

4. *Notes* the catalytic role of UNCDF in supporting least developed countries to respond to and build forward better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;
5. *Recommits* to supporting UNCDF, including through fully funding its resource requirements as enumerated in the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, including capitalizing its investment fund with \$50 million.

11 June 2021

2021/7

United Nations Volunteers programme: Report of the Administrator

The Executive Board

1. *Encourages* the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) to continue to promote the conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results;
2. *Takes note* of the results achieved by UNV in 2020, including a rapid and effective response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as reflected in the report of the Administrator ([DP/2021/25](#));
3. *Reaffirms* the crucial role of the Special Voluntary Fund in delivering the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021 and in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and calls upon all development partners in a position to do so to contribute to the fund;
4. *Commends* UNV for being well embedded in the United Nations system as exemplified by its cooperation with 60 United Nations organizations;
5. *Commends* UNV for the results achieved through its Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, as highlighted in its independent evaluation, and further requests UNV to develop its next strategic framework building on its organizational results and in full alignment with General Assembly resolution [75/233](#);
6. *Asks* UNV to continue its successful efforts towards the organization's digital transformation in the next strategic framework for 2022-2025 and beyond;
7. *Requests* UNV to continue being a strong advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities;
8. *Expresses appreciation* to all United Nations volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the pandemic response and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during 2020.

11 June 2021

2021/8

Implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021: Report of the Executive Director

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the documents that make up the report of the Executive Director for 2020: DP/FPA/2021/4 (Part I, Part I/Add.1 and Part II);
2. *Notes with appreciation* the progress made by UNFPA in achieving the results of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, pursuant to the integrated results and resources framework, during the penultimate year of its implementation;

3. *Notes with concern* the widening financing gap in achieving the three transformative results as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in this regard calls on UNFPA to set ambitious yet prudent income projections, coupled with a pragmatic yet achievable resource mobilization strategy for the next Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.

11 June 2021

2021/9 UNFPA evaluation

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the present report on the evaluation function, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2021;
2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UNFPA and the progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function, in actively adapting the evaluation function to the COVID-19 crisis, in contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts and in fostering national evaluation capacity development;
3. *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 development of the new UNFPA Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
4. *Encourages* UNFPA to design its integrated results and resources framework in line with applicable guidance of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), and requests UNFPA to harmonize, where appropriate, its integrated results and resources framework with other United Nations entities, with a focus on all results levels, and maximize the use of common results indicators, all with the goal of advancing United Nations development system contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals and to further strengthen system-wide evaluation;
5. *Requests* UNFPA to provide in a timely manner, ahead of the second regular session of 2021, more detailed information on the integrated results and resources framework, including on its relationship to the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework;
6. *Encourages* UNFPA to continue to increase investments 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 articulated in the UNFPA Evaluation Policy of 2019.

11 June 2021

2021/10 United Nations Office for Project Services

The Executive Board

1. *Recognizes* the contributions of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in 2020 to the operational results of the United Nations, Governments 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. *Takes note of* the information on the progress achieved with sustainable infrastructure impact investment (S3I) activities in the UNOPS mandated areas and *requests* UNOPS, in continuing its work, to further enhance its reporting on those activities;

5. *Takes note of* the contributions of UNOPS to response and recovery activities related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

11 June 2021

2021/11

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 2020;

2. *Notes with appreciation* efforts to implement outstanding audit recommendations from previous reports;

3. *Appreciates* that UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have provided information on financial losses due to fraud, and encourages UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS management to continue to improve their anti-fraud measures and fraud recovery rates;

4. *Notes* that the implementation of decision 2020/10 remains in progress, and in this regard calls on the offices of internal audit and investigation of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to work with UNICEF, UN-Women and the World Food Programme 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;

5. *Encourages* the offices of internal audit and investigation of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to share with the Executive Board the outcomes of the working group on audit reporting, and encourages them to include analysis on longer-term trends in internal audit and investigation findings in their annual reports to the Executive Board;

6. *Encourages* the offices of internal audit and investigation of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue holding regular informal briefings for Member States, as needed, including in advance of the annual session of the Executive Board;

With regard to UNDP:

7. *Takes note of* the annual report of the Office of Audit and Investigations on internal audit and investigation activities in 2020 (DP/2021/14) and its annexes, and the management response thereto;

8. *Recalls* decision 2021/1, and reiterates its encouragement to UNDP to continue with its organization-specific anti-fraud strategy and to advance the implementation of the fraud risk management action plan, and also reiterates its encouragement to UNDP to coordinate its actions in response to the Board of Auditors recommendations with its actions to address the Office of Audit and Investigations audit entitled “Performance Audit of UNDP Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Management”;

9. *Expresses* continuing support for the internal audit and investigation functions of UNDP;

10. *Takes note of* the annual report of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee;

11. *Takes note* of the continued number of audit recommendations related to programme management, procurement and financial management, including management of implementing partners, and encourages UNDP to take continued steps to address recurring recommendations;

With regard to UNFPA:

12. *Takes note* of (a) the report of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services on UNFPA internal audit and investigation activities in 2020 (DP/FPA/2021/6); (b) 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/2021/6/Add.1); and (c) the management response to the report of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services and the report of the Oversight Advisory Committee;

13. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Oversight Advisory Committee (DP/FPA/2021/6/Add.2);

14. *Expresses* continuing support for the strengthening of the internal audit and investigation functions at UNFPA, notes with concern the number of investigation cases carried over from past years, and calls on UNFPA management to provide sufficient resources for the investigation function to effectively deploy these resources to reduce the caseload;

15. *Acknowledges and supports* the Office of Audit and Investigation Services in joint audit and investigation activities;

16. *Notes* the ratings for audits concluded in 2020, and encourages management to continue to take steps to implement new and outstanding audit recommendations and to address areas of recurring recommendations;

With regard to UNOPS:

17. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Internal Audit and Investigations Group for 2020 (DP/OPS/2021/2) and the management response;

18. *Takes note* of the significant progress made in implementation of audit recommendations;

19. *Takes note* of Internal Audit and Investigations Group compliance with international standards as confirmed in an external quality assessment of its investigation function;

20. *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 (in line with Executive Board decision 2015/13);

21. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Audit Advisory Committee for 2020 (in line with Executive Board decision 2008/37).

11 June 2021

2021/12

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/2021/15, DP/FPA/2021/7 and DP/OPS/2021/3);

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.

11 June 2021

2021/13

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session 2021

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its annual session 2021, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda and approved the workplan for the annual session 2021 (DP/2021/L.2 and Corr.1);

Adopted the report of the first regular session 2021 (DP/2021/12);

Joint segment

Item 2

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

Took note of the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;

Item 3

Internal audit and investigation

Adopted decision 2021/11 on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses;

Item 4

Ethics

Adopted decision 2021/12 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS;

Item 5

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;

UNDP segment

Item 6

Annual report of the Administrator

Adopted decision 2021/4 on the cumulative review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and annual report of the Administrator for 2020;

Item 7

Gender equality at UNDP

Took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2018-2021 ([DP/2021/17](#));

Item 8
UNDP country programmes and related matters

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

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Armenia ([DP/DCP/ARM/5](#));

Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina ([DP/DCP/ARG/4](#));

Approved the third, three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar ([DP/2021/18](#)) and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic from 30 June to 31 December 2021 ([DP/2021/18/Add.1](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, already approved by the Administrator ([DP/2021/18](#));

Item 9
UNDP evaluation

Adopted decision 2021/5 on UNDP evaluation (covering the annual report on evaluation, the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and the third joint Global Environment Facility-UNDP evaluation of the Small Grants Programme);

Item 10
United Nations Capital Development Fund

Adopted decision 2021/6 on the report on results achieved by the United Nations Capital Development Fund in 2020;

Item 11
United Nations Volunteers

Adopted decision 2021/7 on the United Nations Volunteers programme: Report of the Administrator;

UNFPA segment

Item 12
Annual report of the Executive Director

Adopted decision 2021/8 on the implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021: Report of the Executive Director;

Item 13
UNFPA evaluation

Adopted decision 2021/9 on UNFPA evaluation;

Item 14
Country programmes and related matters

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

Armenia ([DP/FPA/CPD/ARM/4/Rev.1](#));

Approved the third, three-month extension of the country programme for Madagascar from 1 July through 30 September 2021 and the fifth, six-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic from 1 July through 31 December 2021 ([DP/FPA/2021/3](#));

UNOPS segment

Item 15

Annual report of the Executive Director

Adopted decision 2021/10 on the United Nations Office for Project Services.

11 June 2021

2021/14

UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

The Executive Board

1. *Notes with appreciation* the transparent and consultative process undertaken by UNDP in developing the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, including the extensive engagement with the Executive Board;
2. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts undertaken by UNDP to align its Strategic Plan with General Assembly resolutions [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and [75/233](#) of 21 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;
3. *Endorses* the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 ([DP/2021/28](#)), takes note of its annexes and requests UNDP to provide updated baselines and targets for the integrated results and resources framework of the new Strategic Plan to the Executive Board;
4. *Notes* that the Strategic Plan, as the overall strategic framework for UNDP, is not intergovernmentally negotiated, and acknowledges that the Strategic Plan includes some terms that have not been intergovernmentally endorsed in the United Nations system;
5. *Acknowledges with appreciation* the best practices of UNDP in the implementation of its strategic plans and requests UNDP to continue this practice at the country level with full respect for the principle of national ownership and leadership of programme countries, taking into account their national priorities and needs, recognizing their different contexts and particular characteristics, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights;
6. *Requests* UNDP to present to the Executive Board at its annual session 2024 a thorough midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 and its annexes, including if required updates to the plan and its annexes;
7. *Recalls* its decision 2021/5, paragraph 12 and requests UNDP to include in the annual reports of the Administrator on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, including in its midterm review, information on results jointly achieved with United Nations development system entities identified through common and complementary indicators.

2 September 2021

2021/15

UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025 ([DP/2021/29](#)), which present a single, integrated budget that includes all budgetary categories, with an improved results focus and enhanced linkages with the results of the Strategic Plan, and harmonized in methodology and presentation, including on cost classification, attribution and recovery, with UNFPA,

UNICEF and UN-Women, as approved by the Executive Board in decision 2020/12 on the joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy ([DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/1](#));

2. *Also welcomes* the transparent and consultative process undertaken by UNDP in the development of the integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025;

3. *Acknowledges with appreciation* the inclusion of a new cost-classification category on independent oversight and assurance activities, with separate budget lines for the Independent Evaluation Office and the Office of Audit and Investigations, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen and clarify financial reporting to further improve Member States' understanding of the financial position of UNDP;

4. *Takes note* of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions ([DP/2021/30](#)) on the institutional components of the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and requests UNDP to address the recommendations and to report back to the Executive Board on actions taken;

5. *Recalls* its decisions 2007/33, 2009/22, 2010/2, 2010/32, 2011/10, 2012/1, 2012/27, 2012/28, 2013/4, 2013/9, 2013/18, 2013/28, 2013/30, 2016/5, 2017/11, 2017/31, 2020/5, 2020/12 and endorses document [DP/2021/29](#) on the integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025 and its annexes, and the provisions contained in the document;

6. *Approves* the integrated budget for 2022-2025 as based on projected regular and other resources available and their projected utilization, including an appropriation of \$1,193.8 million from regular resources for the institutional component of the integrated budget, 2022-2025;

7. *Welcomes* the budget allocations to the United Nations Capital Development Fund and United Nations Volunteers programme and the ongoing contribution to these organizations from the UNDP core budget, particularly in view of their importance for least developed countries, and calls on UNDP to continue to provide contributions to these entities, and to report to the Board if UNDP funding allocations to these entities change over the lifetime of this integrated budget, as per previous decisions including decision 2017/31;

8. *Welcomes* that in the period 2022–2025, UNDP will continue to invest in programme quality and compliance, supported through modernized operational systems and structures, and reinforced through a strengthened internal control framework; notes that these investments would enable UNDP to enhance management and internal oversight capacity at country, regional and central levels to support proactive mitigation of risks as these relate to programmatic and operational work, and notes that these investments would provide further impetus to the implementation of recent evaluation and audit recommendations that point at the need to continue to invest in updating internal monitoring and control systems and country capacities, and also encourages UNDP to continue using appropriate expertise, including local and national, and to support enhanced management and internal oversight capacity in its programmes and projects;

9. *Requests* UNDP, in conjunction with the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, to present a midterm review of the integrated resources plan and the integrated budget.

2 September 2021

2021/16 UNDP structured funding dialogue

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 ([DP/2021/31](#)) and its annexes, including progress made on entity-specific commitments of the funding compact;
2. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular resources, and urges UNDP to continue engaging with Member States to prioritize contributing to UNDP regular resources to enable UNDP to deliver the intended results of the Strategic Plan, restore development gains that have been eroded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and maintain robust internal control and accountability systems;
3. *Recalls* the importance of funding predictability and encourages UNDP to continue its dialogue with Member States to contribute on a multi-year basis for 2021 and future years, to enable UNDP to respond to the evolving needs of programme countries with agility;
4. *Notes* the importance of flexible thematic funding, which is critical for UNDP to accelerate programming to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, and encourages non-earmarked resources;
5. *Encourages* UNDP to continue its dialogue with Member States through structured funding dialogues, on shifting from highly-earmarked to regular and flexible resources, and adhere to the mutually reinforcing commitments of the funding compact.

2 September 2021

2021/17 UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

The Executive Board

1. *Notes with appreciation* the inclusive and consultative process undertaken by UNFPA in developing its new Strategic Plan (contained in document [DP/FPA/2021/8](#));
2. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts undertaken by UNFPA to align its Strategic Plan with General Assembly resolutions [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and [75/233](#) of 21 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations;
3. *Endorses* the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, which shall be implemented consistent with this decision, takes note of its annexes (available on the UNFPA website), and requests UNFPA to provide updated baselines and targets for the integrated results and resources framework of the new Strategic Plan at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2022;
4. *Notes* that the Strategic Plan is the overall strategic framework for UNFPA and is not intergovernmentally negotiated, and acknowledges that the Strategic Plan and its annexes include some terms that have not been intergovernmentally endorsed in the United Nations system;
5. *Requests* UNFPA to implement its Strategic Plan and its annexes in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their reviews, while taking note of the outcome documents

of the regional review conferences on population and development, and stressing that those outcomes provide region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014 for each region that adopted the particular outcome document, as well as in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the agreement and consent of the host country, taking into account the different national legislation and cultural backgrounds, capacities and levels of development, and respecting national policy space, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights;

6. *Recalls* its decision 2021/9, paragraph 4, and requests UNFPA to include in the annual reports of the Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, including in its midterm review, information on results jointly achieved with United Nations development system entities identified through common and complementary indicators.

2 September 2021

2021/18

UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025 (DP/FPA/2021/9), which present a single, integrated budget that includes all budgetary categories, with an improved focus on results and harmonized in methodology and presentation, including on cost classification, attribution and recovery, with UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women, as approved by the Executive Board in decision 2020/12 on the joint comprehensive cost-recovery policy (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/1);
2. *Also welcomes* the transparent and consultative process undertaken by UNFPA in the development of the integrated budget, 2022-2025;
3. *Acknowledges with appreciation* the inclusion of a new cost-classification category on independent oversight and assurance activities, with separate budget lines for the UNFPA Evaluation Office and the Office of Audit and Investigation Services, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen and clarify financial reporting to further improve Member States understanding of the financial position of UNFPA;
4. *Takes note of* the results and resource requirements in the UNFPA integrated budget estimates for 2022-2025, as contained in DP/FPA/2021/9;
5. *Also takes note of* the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (DP/FPA/2021/12) on the UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025, and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and requests UNFPA to address the recommendations and to report back to the Executive Board on actions taken;
6. *Further takes note of* the presentation of activities and associated costs reflected in UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025;
7. *Approves* gross resources of \$839.9 million, representing the institutional budget estimates for 2022-2025, and notes that these estimates include \$235.5 million for indirect cost recovery from other resources;
8. *Also approves* \$204.5 million of the projected regular resources as a ceiling for global and regional programmes for 2022-2025, noting that this amount cannot be exceeded without approval by the Executive Board;
9. *Further approves* an annual amount of \$10 million of regular resources for the emergency fund, recalling Executive Board decision 2015/3, 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;

10. *Endorses* the proposal of the Executive Director, similar to decisions 2008/6, 2012/13, 2013/32 and 2017/24, to grant her exceptional authority during 2022-2025 to access up to an additional \$5.6 million in regular resources for security measures, provided these are used for new and emerging security mandates, as defined by the directives of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, and requests UNFPA to report to the Executive Board on the use of those funds in its annual statistical and financial review;

11. *Requests* UNFPA, in conjunction with the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, to present a midterm review of the integrated budget.

2 September 2021

2021/19 UNFPA structured funding dialogue

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation of* the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2020-2021 ([DP/FPA/2021/10](#));

2. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular (core) resources linked to intended and demonstrated results, as these are critical for UNFPA to deliver on the strategic plans for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

3. *Recalls* the importance of broadening the contributor base, and requests UNFPA to continue engaging with Member States to consider prioritizing contributions to UNFPA regular resources in a timely and predictable manner, in line with the funding compact, and also requests UNFPA to continue to make efforts in terms of visibility and recognition of contributions, in particular for regular resources;

4. *Notes* the importance of flexible thematic funding as critical for UNFPA to be able to accelerate programming to meet the three UNFPA transformative results and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in those areas in which development gains have been eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic;

5. *Urges* UNFPA to continue its dialogue with Member States, through the structured funding dialogues, on shifting from highly earmarked funds to more predictable and flexible funding, especially to core resources, and to support the commitments of the funding compact.

2 September 2021

2021/20 UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

The Executive Board

1. *Expresses appreciation to* UNOPS for the consultative process in the preparation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 ([DP/OPS/2021/5](#));

2. *Endorses* the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and recognizes the contributions UNOPS can make to expand the implementation capacity of countries, based on their respective national priorities and needs, to inter alia achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Acknowledges with appreciation* and requests that UNOPS, in accordance with its Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, implement projects based on the principles of national ownership and in accordance with national priorities and needs, and welcomes UNOPS assistance to countries where people are in need, including in the most fragile situations;
4. *Encourages* UNOPS to begin systematic analysis and reporting to the Executive Board on the contributions of its service delivery to the objectives of partners and the achievement of broader development goals;
5. *Emphasizes* the value-added of UNOPS contributions to quality infrastructure, public procurement and sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation, and requests UNOPS continued engagement in United Nations reform processes and in the United Nations development system, in accordance with its role and mandate;
6. *Encourages* UNOPS to continue to improve its value proposition within its entire mandate to all partners in order for them to take advantage of UNOPS technical expertise and cost-effective implementation support, and encourages UNOPS to continue being a central resource for the United Nations system as well as Governments and all other partners;
7. *Supports* the continued pursuit of quality and organizational excellence guided by UNOPS management goals, and encourages internal investment to fast-track implementation of lessons learned from working under coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and to explore any untapped potential of digitalization.

2 September 2021

2021/21

UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2022-2023 and annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2020

The Executive Board

With regard to the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2022-2023 (DP/OPS/2021/6):

1. *Takes note* of the UNOPS budget estimates 2022-2023 (DP/OPS/2021/6) and its annexes, as well as of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (DP/OPS/2021/7);
2. *Approves* the net zero revenue target;
3. *Endorses* the two-year aspiration of UNOPS with respect to its management results and the targeting of resources to support its contribution goals with a revenue estimate of \$200.5 million, a management resource estimate of \$181.3 million, and an estimated \$19.2 million reserved for provisions, liabilities and contingencies;
4. *Requests* that UNOPS address the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report (DP/OPS/2021/7), including on providing the Executive Board with prudent budget estimates, present further information on the calculation methodology of those estimates for the 2024-2025 biennium and thereafter, reassess the level of management fees with a view to establishing fees at levels which do not accumulate surpluses over and above the realistically assessed operational reserves, report back to the Executive Board at the second regular session in 2022 on these matters, and reflect any changes in the next budget estimates for 2024-2025;
5. *Approves* the change of the minimum requirement for the operational reserve of UNOPS to be set at 25 per cent of the infrastructure service line expenses, 5 per cent of expenses for other service lines, and 33 per cent of administrative cost, with a weight of 50 per cent for the current year, 30 per cent for previous year, and

20 per cent for the year prior (document DP/OPS/2021/6, annex II) to be reported annually to the Executive Board through the annual financial statements;

6. *Requests* that UNOPS, as one of the Co-Chairs of the Chief Executives Board Working Group on Operational Reserves of the Finance and Budget Network of the High-level Committee on Management, continue working with other United Nations development system entities under the Chief Executives Board towards a common framework for a maximum level of reserve, following the timelines communicated by the Chief Executives Board to the wider United Nations system, and further requests that UNOPS update the Board on progress at the annual session 2022;

7. *Requests* that UNOPS present an assessment and rationale for the proposal to create a separate Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) reserve and to report back to the Executive Board at its first regular session 2022, further requests that UNOPS conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the S3I initiative after the end of the pilot phase in December 2023, and present the findings to the Executive Board at the annual session 2024, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;

With regard to the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2020 (DP/OPS/2021/8):

8. *Takes note* of the present report;

9. *Welcomes* the data and analysis it contains.

2 September 2021

2021/22

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session 2021

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its second regular session 2021, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda and approved the workplan for its second regular session 2021 (DP/2021/L.3);

Approved the report of the annual session 2021 (DP/2021/26)

Approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2022;

UNDP segment

Item 2

UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

Adopted decision 2021/14 on the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025;

Item 3

Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2021/15 on the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025;

Item 4

UNDP structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2021/16 on the UNDP structured funding dialogue;

Item 5
UNDP country programmes and related matters

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

Africa: Botswana ([DP/DCP/BWA/3](#)); Cameroon ([DP/DCP/CMR/4](#)); Comoros ([DP/DCP/COM/3](#)); Eritrea ([DP/DCP/ERI/4](#)); Madagascar ([DP/DCP/MDG/4](#)); Zimbabwe ([DP/DCP/ZWE/4](#));

Asia-Pacific: Bangladesh ([DP/DCP/BGD/4](#)); Lao People's Democratic Republic ([DP/DCP/LAO/4](#));

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Albania ([DP/DCP/ALB/3](#))

Latin America and the Caribbean: Guatemala ([DP/DCP/GTM/4](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Gambia, Montenegro, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Sudan, already approved by the Administrator ([DP/2021/33](#));

Approved the first two-year extension of the country programme for Djibouti ([DP/2021/33](#));

Approved the second, one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon and Libya ([DP/2021/33](#));

UNFPA segment

Item 6
UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

Adopted decision 2021/17 on the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025;

Item 7
Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2021/18 on the UNFPA integrated budget, 2022-2025;

Item 8
UNFPA structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2021/19 on the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2020-2021;

Item 9
UNFPA country programmes and related matters

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

Albania ([DP/FPA/CPD/ALB/5](#)); Bangladesh ([DP/FPA/CPD/BGD/10](#)); Botswana ([DP/FPA/CPD/BWA/7](#)); Comoros ([DP/FPA/CPD/COM/7](#)); Guatemala ([DP/FPA/CPD/GTM/8](#)); Lao People's Democratic Republic ([DP/FPA/CPD/LAO/7](#)); Madagascar ([DP/FPA/CPD/MDG/8](#)); Zimbabwe ([DP/FPA/CPD/ZWE/8](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions, approved by the UNFPA Executive Director, of the UNFPA country programmes for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Gambia, Iran, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Sudan;

Approved the second, one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lebanon, Libya, Tajikistan and Zambia ([DP/FPA/2021/11](#));

UNOPS segment

Item 10

UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

Adopted decision 2021/20 on the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022-2025;

Item 11

Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Adopted decision 2021/21 on the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2022-2023 and annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2020.

2 September 2021

Annex II

Membership of the Executive Board in 2021

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

African States: Algeria (2023), Botswana (2021), Cameroon (2021), Gambia (2021), Nigeria (2023), Rwanda (2021), Somalia (2022), South Africa (2021).

Asia-Pacific States: Bangladesh (2023), China (2022), India (2021), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (2023), Kuwait (2022), Republic of Korea (2021), Vanuatu (2021).

Eastern European States: Bulgaria (2022), Czech Republic (2022), Russian Federation (2023), Ukraine (2021).

Latin American and Caribbean States: Colombia (2022), Cuba (2023), Guatemala (2023), Mexico (2021), Peru (2022).

Western European and other States:* Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, The Netherlands (Kingdom of), United Kingdom, 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 27 May 2021

1. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS opened the virtual meeting by announcing the theme of the 2021 JMB: “QCPR and UNDS reform in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; what has happened in the last 12 months since the last JMB.” She welcomed the Presidents of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UN-Women and the World Food Programme, the Deputy Secretary-General as a guest speaker, as well as the principals and deputies of the participating agencies.

2. In her opening address, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that the JMB was a well-timed opportunity to follow-up on the discussion within the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment and to consider actions that would be needed from the six entities and their Executive Boards in supporting the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. She reiterated the excellent progress collectively made over the past year by the UN development system (UNDS), especially in the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. She noted that the response to the pandemic had been a litmus test for the development system and a success.

3. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that the coordination role given to the Resident Coordinator (RC) and the programming for the UN country teams (UNCTs) for the 2030 Agenda has been a great impetus for the system to do more for the recovery from COVID-19. She cautioned, however, that the pandemic was far from over and there was a need to step up collective action as a system in support of delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She outlined seven areas in the review of the RC system where the attention of entities and the support of the Executive Boards was needed:

i. Developing new Strategic Plans for 2022–2025 – she noted that this is a critical opportunity to strengthen the alignment of the business models of agencies, funds and programmes and the programming approaches to the reform, focusing on SDGs and the principle of “leaving no one behind.”

ii. Funding to support integrated work and accelerate SDG implementation – the Deputy Secretary-General stressed the major need for integrated approaches to be backed up by more unearmarked and flexible funding from Member States, with the view to support pooled funding arrangements, as called for in the Funding Compact.

iii. Aligning agencies’ programmes and Cooperation Frameworks – the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that despite many improvements made in the last 12 months, attention must now be focused on their implementation, noting the need for closer collaboration in the process of developing common system-wide measures to assess contributions by the entities to the SDGs and to use common platforms like UN INFO.

iv. Enhancing the principle of dual accountability of the new RC independent system, both to the entities and to the Secretary-General – the Deputy Secretary-General noted that all six agencies covered by the JMB are among the eighteen entities that have formalized reporting requirements among their representatives and the RCs as part of their performance and appraisal systems. At the same time, there are a number of reports from the RCs about country representatives from across the system not engaging proactively in this process. She further added that there is a need for clear messages and direction by the entities and their governing bodies to the country level to that effect, in line with the requirements that have been set out in the

internal guidance provided by the country-level Management and Accountability Framework.

v. *Advancing system-wide approaches* – strengthening system-wide approaches at the regional level, including the rollout of regional collaborative platforms under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, the UNDP regional director and the regional commissions executive secretaries as vice-chairs, is a positive new development with important implications for entities' regional offices.

vi. *Improving efficiency* – the six entities have a crucial role to play in achieving efficiency through common business services and premises and good progress has been made so far. The Deputy Secretary-General encouraged the Executive Boards to continue to deepen the dialogue with entities regarding efficiencies, including those coming from single entities or generated bilaterally.

vii. *Continuing support for the RC system and UNDS reform* – more is needed to ensure strong and consistent messages at all levels in support of the RC system and UNDS reform. Also, more work is needed by individual entities to ensure familiarity with and understanding of the obligations and expectations, ensuring that the RC benefits from the right combination of accountability and incentives.

4. The Deputy Secretary-General also highlighted that, three years into the reform, the improvements that have been generated by an independent, impartial and empowered RC system can be clearly seen, alongside a new generation of UNCTs. However, there were messages from the Member States pointing to the significant gap between ambition and reality, expectations and deliverables of reform. Therefore, all options should be explored to ensure that the right accountability and incentives are in place to close that gap.

5. Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General expressed gratitude to the six agencies for their engagement, commitment and support, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown that the investments in repositioning the UNDS are very fruitful.

6. In his introduction to the topic of the JMB, the President of the Executive Board of WFP emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic is a defining global crisis with devastating health and socio-economic consequences. He also noted that the major priority moving forward must be preventing famine and addressing food insecurity as a primary means to build resilience to shocks. The pandemic has already created the largest disruption in education in history with millions of students experiencing interruptions in learning and subsequent missed meals, impacting longer term skill development and economic prospects. The pandemic also rolled back progress on gender equality, health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, unpaid care and domestic work, gender-based violence, and the overall achievement of the SDGs. The President of the Executive Board of WFP further noted that there has never been more need for unity and cohesiveness across the UNDS. Against this backdrop, the President invited the participants to reflect on the lessons learned from the pandemic and the ways in which the agencies, funds and programmes can leverage the QCPR (Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review), the common agenda and the UNDS reform to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

7. The UNOPS Executive Director mentioned that although the pandemic has put to the test the agency's ability to respond to the challenges and needs of its partners, UNOPS was able to quickly adapt to the changing realities and continued to provide support to its partners, including longer-term solutions towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery. This ability to mobilize quickly was rooted in the demand-driven, self-financed business model of UNOPS. In a short time, the agency signed agreements for some 900 millions USD in projects in support of the COVID-19

response. The Executive Director provided the example of the Idai Recovery Project in Zimbabwe, implemented in collaboration with FAO, IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, and of the National Resilience Programme in Bangladesh, where the agency delivered quality and cost-effective solutions for its partners, in partnership with the Government, UNDP and UN-Women. She highlighted the Idai Recovery Project as an example of collaborative work with other sister agencies in “delivering as one” to address the immediate and medium-term recovery needs of countries.

8. Concurring with the previous speakers, the UNDP Administrator noted that the UNDS did mobilize its full capacity across 131 UNCTs as never before to support countries in response to the pandemic. UNDP was entrusted by the Secretary-General, in close coordination with the Deputy Secretary-General as the technical lead for the UN socio-economic response to COVID-19, working closely with the newly empowered and independent RC system but also with the sister agencies within the wider system of the UNCTs. The framework covers integrated priorities, including strengthened health systems, social protection, jobs, livelihoods, macroeconomic and social cohesion. The Administrator mentioned the willingness of many countries to address emerging challenges with new standing and focus, and the readiness to invest in an accelerated pace of change through digitalization, and investing in a green economy.

9. He noted that UNDP had developed a green recovery pathway together with UNEP, UNCTAD, ILO and FAO to ensure that countries receive the best possible support from the system, be it in energy transition, climate adaptation and nature-based solutions. Also, new mechanisms are being developed to address the challenges of crushing debts that countries face. The Administrator further highlighted that accelerated progress towards a digital green future where no one is left behind will be UNDP’s priority during the next Strategic Plan period, as it has been during the pandemic.

10. Highlighting the pandemic’s painful economic consequences on children and their families, the UNICEF Executive Director acknowledged the UNDS’ central role in providing an inclusive and sustainable recovery for all. UNICEF joined 11 agencies and two international NGOs to maintain a steady flow of affordable personal protective equipment, to keep people, including frontline workers safe. From procurement to quality assurance, from packaging to transportation, the UN Procurement Hub in Copenhagen led this effort, which resulted in delivery of over 140 thousand metric tons of supplies to 173 countries. Through the COVAX facility, UNICEF was working with other agencies, governments, transportation logistics organizations and the pharmaceutical industry to support the shipment of 75 million vaccine doses to 125 participating countries.

11. UNICEF also worked with other agencies to support long-term economic recovery through innovative social protection programmes. This joint work has expanded the coverage of national social protection programmes for over 47 million households in 128 countries.

12. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director warned the participants that the impact of the pandemic has rolled back progress for women, girls, and young people, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. Gender-based violence has increased and the pandemic has disrupted contraceptive use for millions of women around the world, increasing the proportion of unintended pregnancies, particularly in low-income countries. In coordination with the United Nations country teams, UNFPA has developed innovative approaches to ensure the continuity of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights through the pandemic, addressing harmful practices and gender-based violence,

ensuring the supply of contraceptives and reproductive health commodities, as well as the provision of personal protective equipment.

13. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director informed that, in a recent internal survey, UNFPA country offices reported that UNDS reforms had provided a solid foundation for UNCTs to facilitate timely and effective responses to the pandemic. RCs are seen as playing a key role in enabling the effective and inclusive participation of UN entities in response to the priorities of women and girls.

14. On other aspects of reform, the Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA specified that about 70 percent of the agency's country offices reported some forms of efficiency gains by undertaking joint procurement with other agencies and entering long-term agreements for service providers. At the same time, given the need to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Deputy Executive Director highlighted the importance of flexible funding by Member States as well as adhering to their commitments in the Funding Compact.

15. The WFP Deputy Executive Director commended the manner in which the agencies responded to the COVID-19 crisis as one of the best examples of UN coordination, unity and cohesion. At the same time, he questioned why coordination had not been achieved prior to the crisis. In his view, the pandemic generated multiple lessons about developing and implementing socio-economic responses with partners and system interoperability, calling for "building forward together" and focusing on the multi-dimensional and layered needs of the vulnerable, and developing a joint understanding of the drivers of that vulnerability. He stated that none of these needs can be addressed through the mandate of one single agency. Joint analysis, action and programming on health, nutrition, and social protection were seen as safeguards against future shocks that would protect the development gains and the investments that have been made and would build long term sustainable solutions.

16. Recalling that even before the pandemic hit, the world was not close to achieving the goals and aspirations of the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN-Women Deputy Executive Director underlined the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls, widening gender gaps. She stressed that while the pandemic cast a light on existing inequalities, it also created new problems, with women's increased caregiving responsibilities, therefore making it difficult for them to participate in the labour force, and further sharpening digital inequalities. Against this backdrop, working jointly with UN partners and building on its triple mandate, UN-Women has sought to advance a coherent and integrated focus on gender equality in its response to the pandemic.

17. The Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women highlighted three ways in which UN-Women had played an important role in this process: *i.* advancing thought leadership and shaping the discourse in the UN system on the impact of the pandemic on women and girls; *ii.* gathering, publishing and using data regarding the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls and reflecting this in socio-economic response plans; *iii.* including both gender markers and financial targets for gender programming within the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) and the UN Trust Fund for Response and Recovery, having a crucial impact on joint programming and on including a gender lens in the responses.

18. The President of the Executive Board of WFP was pleased with WFP's alignment with the UN common frameworks and the continuing promotion by the agency of innovation as part of the reform work, with the view to align itself with the priorities of the host countries and avoid redundancies among the mandates of various agencies. At the same time, he expressed concern about the massive challenges that lay ahead, with 270 million people around the world facing hunger. He stressed the

focus on strengthening Member States' resilience to shocks, which allows them to respond in an individual capacity when a crisis arises.

19. In their comments, Member States thanked the Heads of agencies and the Deputy Executive Directors for providing updates on their collective efforts to address the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic under very difficult circumstances. They generally approved of the cooperative work done through the crisis and encouraged these efforts to continue and to be replicated across the system to build long-term resilience, accelerate SDG implementation and "leave no one behind."

20. Speaking as a donor, one speaker highlighted that the pandemic had shown how intertwined global challenges are, reflecting the need for multilateral solutions and creating much-needed momentum for a coordinated global crisis response, and the importance of strong partnerships to achieve this. He thanked the agencies for their strong embrace of the conclusions of the 2020 QCPR. Moving forward, he stressed the need to persist with a coordinated response and expand it to other areas, namely: *i.* climate change adaptation and mitigation, and nature-based solutions; *ii.* a system-wide digital strategy for the post-pandemic world; *iii.* full gender recovery from the effects of COVID-19; and *iv.* further operationalizing the "leaving no one behind" principle. He also suggested these priorities should be reflected in the new Strategic Plans.

21. Some delegations took the opportunity to highlight other priorities which, from their perspective, were important in order to reverse the adverse effects of the pandemic. These included generalizing the distribution of vaccines, promoting innovative financing mechanisms and supporting local economies.

22. Another speaker called for continued efforts to enhance harmonization between agencies' activities within the Cooperation Frameworks. It was noted that close to 40 percent of UN entities have yet to take action in harmonizing their agency-specific programming in line with the Cooperation Framework guidance. Similarly, agencies were encouraged to further enhance collaboration to meet the humanitarian-development-peace nexus through more joint development activities, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

23. The need to further strengthen multilateral cooperation along with South-South, triangular, and North-South cooperation was also mentioned by the delegations.

24. Noting that 47 percent of UN agencies have not changed the job description of their country representatives to make it clear that they now report to the RC, delegations urged agencies to do so, as well as to take further steps to ensure that the leadership of the RC is fully respected and supported at the country level.

25. Looking ahead to the implementation of the 2020 QCPR, and through the example of the Procurement Hub which worked through the COVID-19 pandemic to support 436 organizations with emergency transport, personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies, delegations wanted to see joint programming increasing in the future. In addition, agencies were encouraged to prioritize the connection on data and statistics with the view to improve and accelerate collective planning and implementation.

26. To maintain the momentum on UNDS reform, the six agencies were encouraged to continue to advance their reform commitments in order to ensure harmonized and efficient policy, programmatic and common approaches. This includes joint programming efforts which bring together the collective expertise of the UNDS to address country needs and priorities.

27. Partnering with international financial institutions was also stressed as a way to help advance achievement of the SDGs. Delegations found that the examples taken from country responses once more highlighted the potential for cooperation with these institutions through data sharing and cross-organizational policy approaches.
28. Reflecting further on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls, one delegation highlighted the importance of gender data and the support for countries to access funding to address gender statistics.
29. Noting the pivotal role of multilateralism and solidarity, some delegations highlighted that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions must continue to be the overarching goal of the agencies' work. Their policies must continue to be aligned with the QCPR, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, while keeping the focus on countries in special situations.
30. Delegations recognized the importance of flexible funding and core contributions, the deficit of which is affecting the capacity of the UN system to respond to the pandemic and fulfill the mandate to reposition the UNDS.
31. In response to the comments and questions by Member States, the UNOPS Executive Director referred to her role as Chair of the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM). She explained the work and the purpose of the Committee to ensure better platforms for interagency collaboration, simplify business practices and become more efficient. The Committee is consensus-based and proved to be quite efficient through the pandemic. It also aims to build more transparent relationships to enable Member States to hold the agencies accountable and help them manage expectations from the outset. The Committee also focuses on building strategic partnerships to achieve the SDGs.
32. The UNOPS Executive Director reaffirmed the agency's full support for the UN reform. As a non-programmatic, self-financed agency, UNOPS highlighted strong demand for its services and emphasized transparency, added value, flexibility and the quality and speed of its services, elements which, the Executive Director mentioned, will be incorporated into the agency's Strategic Plan for 2022–2025.
33. The UNDP Administrator noted the multifaceted dimensions of COVID-19 while the agency was working actively to understand the impact of the pandemic, identify where the vulnerabilities were the greatest and the setbacks most profound. He stated that UNDP was reflecting deeply on the lessons learned on how to best use the analyses that emerge from the assessments and data that UNDP generates nationally and internationally, in order to target areas where UNDP can bring the greatest impact.
34. Referring to the comments regarding the priorities for the next Strategic Plans, the UNDP Administrator explained that the imperative of green recovery will be quite central to the way the agency will be moving forward. Similarly, poverty eradication, social protection and digitalization will be essential to support economic recovery, while the QCPR, the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda will serve as the template for implementation. The Administrator further added that national ownership remains a reference point for UNDP.
35. On the topic of UNDS reform, the Administrator clarified that UNDP had revised the terms of reference for its Resident Representatives very early on, to explicitly refer to the core elements of the Cooperation Framework in UNDP's work. He further highlighted that the principle of mutual accountability must be strengthened on the basis of implementing the Management and Accountability Framework. The Administrator invited Member States to exercise due care in ensuring that agencies, funds and programmes can maintain their accountability in

the context of the UNDS reform and to their Boards, while keeping in mind that the reform narrative must not only focus on the mechanics of coordination, but on the actual impact that it generates.

36. Continuing on the theme of UN reform and the Strategic Plan, the UNICEF Executive Director mentioned three priority areas that her agency will be focusing on: *i.* the adaptation needs of climate change; *ii.* digitalization for education; and *iii.* nutrition. She further added that the UNICEF country programmes are being fully aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks.

37. The UNICEF Executive Director also spoke about the efficiencies that the agencies can generate following the UNDS reform, and which can bring great advantages, including by investing them into country programmes.

38. Acknowledging the value of inter-agency cooperation on procurement activities, based on the experience of the joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Director of UNICEF highlighted that the UN system can be a trusted procurement source and that this is an area in which the UNDS can grow.

39. Responding to the Member States' comments regarding the interoperability of data with the view to improve and accelerate collective planning and implementation, the UNICEF Executive Director pointed to the critical need of flexible funding for agencies to be able to realize such interoperability and fund platforms like the UN INFO data system.

40. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director confirmed that the entity's country programmes are fully aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks and the country representatives are evaluated against the Management and Accountability Framework as a measure of their performance. He reiterated the agency's commitment to joint programming, noting the significant increase in funding UNFPA had received from inter-agency pooled funds, a trend which is foreseen to increase in the years to come. He also reiterated the importance of non-earmarked and flexible funding to promote joint programming by the agencies.

41. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director concurred with the delegations mentioning the importance of sex-disaggregated data for evidence-based planning, including in the context of the ongoing global health crisis. He noted that UNFPA has established a COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard, providing data disaggregated at the national and sub-national levels and updated on a daily basis.

42. Referring to the next generation of Strategic Plans, the Deputy Executive Director of WFP reiterated their importance in reflecting UNDS reform in a well-coordinated manner, noting the importance of creating new strategic plans aligned with the 2020 QCPR and the Cooperation Frameworks. He also emphasized the role played by the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and its impact on resilience and preparedness, as well as the need for shock-responsive social-protection systems to prepare countries for future crises.

43. The Deputy Executive Director of WFP emphasized the Management and Accountability Framework as a crucial foundation to ensuring mutual accountability and highlighted the WFP's strong engagement in this regard.

44. He also emphasized the importance of incorporating lessons learned from the pandemic into the understanding of the RCs role with heightened responsibility to lead and as a point of cohesion.

45. Recalling the 2008 financial crisis, the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women pointed to the COVID-19 pandemic as a truly integrated crisis on many fronts. She cautioned of the danger of more inequalities arising from it, which is already being seen in the unequal access to vaccines. She further observed the real

possibility of societies looking quite different in the aftermath of the pandemic, with widened gender gaps and women no longer visible in leadership positions or participating fully in the economy.

46. The nature of this crisis is necessitating an unprecedented partnership approach which the agencies cannot accomplish alone. The UN-Women Deputy Executive Director mentioned several examples of UN-Women working together with other agencies in response to the crisis such as: *i.* the partnership with UNFPA on the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls; *ii.* the collaboration with UNDP on the Gender Policy Tracker monitoring global gender policy measures to tackle the COVID-19 crisis; and *iii.* the work with the WHO on disaggregating data on COVID-19 cases by sex and age.

47. The UN-Women Deputy Executive Director added that these partnerships will have to extend beyond the UN system in order to be successful. The UN-Women Deputy Executive Director cited the Generation Equality Forum as one such platform for external partnerships, bringing together not only the UN system, but also leveraging partnerships with civil society, the private sector and international financial institutions. In addition, she mentioned the opportunity to influence multilateral processes, such as the G20, COP26 and G7 to ensure that the SDGs are at the center of those discussions.

48. The UN-Women Deputy Executive Director noted the extremely limited funding for gender equality in the UN system, with less than two percent of resources spent actually going specifically towards advancing gender equality. She noted that this underscores the need for an integrated approach to ensure that gender is not only part of the Strategic Plans but also of joint programming.

49. In his final remarks, the Vice-President of the UN-Women Executive Board and moderator of the session's interactive discussion, underscored that moving towards the achievement of the SDGs will require significant collaborative efforts. Acknowledging the added burden on the UN system, he recognized the collaborative work by the agencies to deliver results under very challenging circumstances. Looking ahead at the development of the entities' Strategic Plans, the moderator underlined the importance of people-centered, gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches, while addressing the interlinkage between health, trade, finance and economic and social development.

50. In closing of the meeting, the President of the Executive Board of UNICEF echoed the Member States' messages to the agencies, encouraging them to work together more closely, while at the same time noting the progress already achieved as shown in the examples discussed during the meeting. In addition, he stressed the importance of the agencies' unique mandates and comparative advantages, each contributing their own innovative ideas, talents and resources to the collective effort. He found that, while the pandemic revealed new ways of working together, the work and examples that were discussed were vital and encouraging to solving the world's interrelated problems.

