**COMMENTS ON THE UNDP DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC (2022-2024)**

*Annual session 2022*

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| Comments by Belgium | UNDP Response |
| The CPD does not correctly reflect the current situation in Syria. The CPD does not mention the conflict and eclipses the need for a comprehensive peace process in accordance with UNSC resolution 2254. Belgium cannot accept the absence of reference to the role of the Syrian regime in causing the extreme challenges that the CPD tries to address. The CPD fails to acknowledge that Syria’s present crisis is directly caused by, and continually exacerbated by armed conflict. The need for an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that creates a sustainable solution to the conflict, in line with UNSC resolution 2254, remains essential and must be clearly stated in the document. | The CPD outlines a number of key features that compound the crisis in Syria, such as the severe socio-economic crisis, the destruction of the basic services infrastructure, significant environmental degradation, large-scale migration and displacement, as well as challenges around corruption, provision of civil documentation and the management of housing, land and property records, weakened local institutional capacities and community engagement – all of which have been worsened by COVID-19 and the financial crisis in Lebanon. Given this we have also now better highlighted these dimensions by using the term “humanitarian crisis” in the text.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the Resident Coordinator. Therefore, the description of the current situation in Syria is also aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework.  The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities. It does so by underpinning its programming with context-sensitive analysis and risk management measures to ensure “do no harm”, while seeking to strengthen social cohesion.  As emphasized in CPD, UNDP operates fully in line with the current “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner.  For the first time, the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria are explicitly referenced in the CPD. |
| Belgium welcomes the realistic assessment related to risk management. Continued conflict and violence pose serious threats to UNDP programme implementation. Given the political and security reality in Syria, how can UNDP ensure that operational space, including the security and access to beneficiaries, will be available to deliver the results in an independent and impartial way? Which additional safeguards mechanisms could be foreseen in order to make sure that the CPD serves the intended purposes and not the interests of the regime? | UNDP in Syria has invested in in-house context-sensitivity and risk management capacities. UNDP bases its programming on an assessment of the specific context in the areas in which it operates in order to ensure the relevance of its programming to local needs and deliver in a neutral and impartial way that upholds a human-rights based and *Do No Harm* approach, regardless of zones of influence.  In these efforts, UNDP’s extensive field presence and continuous, close engagement with communities is critical. UNDP has also put in place beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms. In addition, the establishment of a Context Sensitivity Team in the Country Office is a core component of UNDP’s approach to ensure *do no harm* and humanitarian principles, including through the identification of humanitarian access challenges. All UNDP personnel – both programme and operations – receive context sensitivity and risk management capacity building. |
| The CPD points to a very close cooperation between UNDP and the Syrian regime considered as a major partner in its annex. Belgium urges UNDP to remain very careful in its relationship with ministries and other public entities and considers that more guarantees are needed to prevent the interests of the beneficiaries from political and security interferences. | UNDP’s CPD references “*coordination* with relevant Government authorities at various stages and levels of action in the implementation of the country programme.” Coordination with national and local authorities is relevant for the delivery of effective and more sustainable early recovery assistance that meets the needs of vulnerable Syrians. This is in line with Executive Summary of the Sixth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria held on 1 April 2022 which notes that “while Early Recovery assistance is to be delivered independently and impartially, effective programming would benefit from engagement with local authorities.”  UNDP adopts a context-sensitive and community-based approach to the delivery of early recovery to ensure that inclusive, community-driven priorities and solutions inform UNDP programming that is within the bound of the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”. Sustained community consultations through its field offices and on-going context analysis provides safeguards to minimize risks of interference by different actors. As noted in the 15 December 2021 Secretary General Report on United Nations humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2021/1030), “by decentralizing operations, the United Nations has been able to increase engagement in projects of communities and local authorities at the local level. Engagement is critical to ensure that communities have a greater say in the rehabilitation and distribution of critical services” (para 56).  Furthermore, UNDP in Syria has significantly increased its capacity and risk mitigation and management approach, across its operations to ensure that assistance is needs based, free from interference, and in line with humanitarian principles. (Please see Paras 24 – 28 of the CPD.) |
| **Comments by Finland** | UNDP Response |
| As a general comment, the CPD could reflect more on how UNDP plans and implements its operations “as One UN”. | UNDP places high importance on its diverse partnerships with all UN partners and will proactively engage in different working groups established at the country level to enhance programmatic and operational coherence of “one UN”. In that regard, UNDP is part of the UN Country Team, the Humanitarian Country Team, the Programme Management Team, the UN Hubs in the governorates, and the Operations Management Team, where it supports the reform agenda through the roll-out of the Business Operations Strategy. In 2022, UNDP will carry a leadership/chair role in the socio-economic pillar group and the local governance pillar group, the Risk Management Working Group, and the Return and Reintegration Working Group. It is also an active member in various other UN system-wide working groups and task forces such as the socioeconomic impact assessment, poverty, social protection, cash working group, humanitarian access, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Accountability to Affected Populations, Youth and others.  UNDP is part of the UN joint programmes implemented in Syria and also promotes a joint approach to context-sensitive area-based early recovery in the field that leverages the resources and comparative advantages of different UN agencies in delivering more integrated and impactful early recovery assistance in prioritized areas.  To highlight UNDP’s commitment to a One UN approach, “One UN” is now further highlighted in para. 22 of the CPD, with specific strategic inter-agency membership and engagement highlighted. |
| We appreciate this part in the last chapter: *we commend the forward leaning approach to data and involving and highlighting the role of the UN secretariat, the regional actors, and other UN agencies and entities in this work.* | This is acknowledged with thanks, given the importance of partnerships around data. |
| Chapter 9 reads: ”UNDP will (a) apply an integrated cross-sectoral approach, building complementarities between United Nations agencies, and acting as a connector around resilience and early recovery in the Humanitarian Response Plan…” Question for clarification: What does “acting as a connector” mean in practice? | UNDP will leverage its role as coordinator of the Early Recovery and Livelihoods Sector to promote inter-agency and inter-sector cooperation through joint analysis and joint programming, where possible, thereby acting as a “connector”.  By facilitating discussions around early recovery and resilience, UNDP seeks to expand the work of all sectors in promoting resilience under Outcome 3 of the HRP. UNDP has been promoting more integrated ways of working, especially at the field level, through its local early recovery planning efforts and by developing, through its co-chairing of the HCT’s Return and Reintegration Working Group, a joint, area-based approach to early recovery programming in areas experiencing high IDP returns. By facilitating such processes, UNDP connects efforts of different agencies for more impactful early recovery programming. It also seeks to further connect different UN agencies with local communities by facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues in the identification of community priorities and solutions related to local early recovery. |
| Appreciate that the CPD refers to and takes into account the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy | This is acknowledged with thanks. The economic and social inclusion of persons with disabilities remains a key priority for UNDP. Generous support by the Government of Finland has allowed UNDP to expand support and services to PWDs and to promote UN wide adoption of disability inclusion actions in line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. |
| **Comments by Germany** | UNDP Response |
| CPDs are overall well drafted and address the right priorities in light of the multiple challenges in the SYR context. | This is acknowledged with thanks. |
| We welcome that UNDP underlines the need for government cooperation to facilitate access and independent delivery. | This is acknowledged and well noted. |
| However, the CPDs do only partly reflect the current situation in SYR. There is no mention of the conflict which is in its 12th year or the role of the SYR regime in causing the extreme challenges that the UN programmes try to address. | The CPD outlines a number of key features that compound the crisis in Syria, such as the severe socio-economic crisis, the destruction of the basic services infrastructure, significant environmental degradation, large-scale migration and displacement, as well as challenges around corruption, provision of civil documentation and the management of housing, land and property records, weakened local institutional capacities and community engagement – all of which have been worsened by COVID-19 and the financial crisis in Lebanon. Given this we have also now better highlighted these dimensions by using the term “humanitarian crisis” in the text.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC. Therefore, the description of the current situation in Syria is also aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework.  The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities.  As emphasized in the CPD, UNDP operates fully in line with the current “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner. For the first time, the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  As noted above, where relevant the document has been adjusted to reflect “humanitarian crisis”. |
| The CPDs also reflect the reservations of the SYR regime regarding the UN Parameters and Principles. We suggest to underline that the full implementation of UN Parameters and Principles is key to the UN engagement for the SYR population. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal, UN document that informs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD.  Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has now been rephrased from : *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the new version as now reflected in the CPD: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the ‘Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria’”.* |
| **Comments by USA** | UNDP Response |
| The United States reiterates its serious concerns regarding the UN Strategic Framework for Syria (Framework). While we acknowledge this is a document agreed to by the UN and host government, it underpins agency specific Country Program Documents (CPDs), which require Executive Board approval and implicate financial contributions to the work of UN agencies.  The United States, joined by other member states, has expressed strong objections to the narrative of the Framework and concerns that it could undermine country level UN programs designed to help alleviate suffering of the Syrian people.  We are disappointed that the final Framework agreed by the UN and Assad regime retains language we find unacceptable.  The UN Strategic Framework ignores the fact that conflict – and specifically, the Assad regime’s brutal war against its own people – is the main cause of Syrians’ suffering today.  The document does not even use the word “conflict” to describe the situation in Syria since 2011.  Nothing in the Framework alters the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which was agreed unanimously by the Security Council, and remains the agreed upon international path for a political solution to the Syrian conflict.  The United States firmly supports the work of the Commission of Inquiry, IIIM, and other UN bodies, that are working to investigate crimes committed inside Syria by the Assad regime and other actors.  The United States remains committed to promoting accountability for the regime’s atrocities, and we reiterate our willingness to impose U.S. sanctions on regime officials who commit atrocities.  There can be no lasting political solution in Syria absent justice.  The Framework will not change U.S. policy regarding assistance in Syria – including our opposition to government-led reconstruction in Syria in the absence of a political solution.  The United States will not fund UN programs that engage in reconstruction, and we will keep holding the UN to the commitments it has made within the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.”  The 2022-2024 UN Strategic Framework is not representative of the realities on the ground and is not reflective of the work being done by UN actors.  Moreover, the document is full of dated statistics and information, and has not been updated. | UNDP notes the position of the USA and reiterates that UNDP remains firmly committed to a principled approach to the delivery of assistance in Syria.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the Resident Coordinator.  As emphasized in the CPD, UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which, for the first time, is explicitly referenced in the CPD. “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner.  Reference to “humanitarian crisis” has been explicitly included in the CPD. |
| From the perspective of the United States, UN agency CDPs based on a fundamentally flawed Framework could have implications for UN activities on the ground. We expect UNDP to provide a clear explanation as to how it intends to mitigate the risk associated with the implementation of this CPD vis a vis the Strategic Framework in the following areas: | Responses to this comment are provided below, across the different issues. |
| **First**, the CPD and its implementation should adhere to the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,” including the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and independence for life-saving humanitarian assistance and early recovery and resilience activities. **Footnote #17**, which reads “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled ‘Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,’*” effectively negates the possibility of implementing the CPD within the guidance of these Parameters and Principles. The United States requests the deletion of **Footnote #17** and seeks clear assurances and explanations from UNDP as to how it intends to implement this CPD in line with the Parameters and Principles. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which, for the first time, is explicitly referenced in the CPD. The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal document from the UN Secretary General, that governs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes inside Syria. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD.  Footnote 18 (formerly Footnote 17) has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.” to the new text as now reflected in the CPD:*  “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.* |
| **Second**, UNDP country and community context analyses to inform both the public and its own program decision-making must reflect all stakeholders’ input and the impact of armed conflicts on the country and local communities. | UNDP agrees with this comment. In undertaking its country and context sensitivity analysis, UNDP ensures the inputs and perspectives of the widest range of stakeholders to reflect diverse local level needs and concerns. This is primarily achieved through broad, local level consultations led by its numerous field offices across the country. UNDP informs area-based programming through local context analyses, which include an assessment of the impact of the last 11 years on communities, including on social cohesion and protection. |
| **Third,** UNDP management must recognise and acknowledge that the regime is responsible for the continued conflicts and violence also poses serious risks to UNDP work in country through pressure and threats to deviate from UN values and principles.  UNDP management must institute a system to mitigate such risks and to resist regime pressure and report to the Board whenever it happens.  This also includes risk mitigation efforts to address well-documented examples of government corruption, diversion of aid to favoured communities, and profiting through exchange rate arbitrage. | UNDP in Syria has significantly increased its capacity in risk mitigation and adopted a risk management approach, across its operations. UNDP regularly updates its critical risk analysis to ensure that timely preventive mitigation measures are taken to avoid programme disruption and doing harm to the communities it serves.  UNDP’s Country Office systems, structures and capacities, particularly in planning, implementation, monitoring and oversight, have been put in place to support risk-informed decision-making. This includes a Context Sensitivity Advisor and a Senior Risk Management Adviser, with a single direct reporting line to the Resident Representative, to ensure robust risk mitigation and management. The Country Office has strengthened its analytical capacities in context-sensitivity, both at Damascus level and through its seven field offices and programme presences, to strengthen *do no harm* across its operations.  UNDP continuously assesses risks to its ability to deliver assistance in a neutral and impartial way that upholds a human-rights based and *Do No Harm* approach. In these efforts, UNDP’s extensive field presence in the country and continuous, close engagement with communities is critical. UNDP has also put in place beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms. The establishment of a Context Sensitivity Team in the Country Office is a core component of UNDP’s approach to ensure *do no harm* and humanitarian principles, including through the identification of humanitarian access challenges. All UNDP personnel – both programme and operations – receive context sensitivity and risk management capacity building.  UNDP has also strengthened it operational capacities in finance and procurement to reduce and mitigate any risks of wrongful diversion of resources in these areas through improved due diligence and appropriate risk identification and mitigation measures in responsible party selection, procurement and human resource processes. It ensures that its personnel and partners are conscious of the controls that need to be applied.  UNDP, in its current role as co-chair of the United Nations Risk Management Working Group, works with other agencies to identify collective risks and mitigation measures to the United Nations system in Syria – including risks related to corruption and diversion of aid.  UNDP actively participates in the Regional Dialogue Mechanism co-chaired by the RC and the UK, with the membership of the US, France, Germany, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland from the donor community; and the RC, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR from the UNCT. A transparent dialogue and shared assessments between the United Nations and key Member States on such key issues as the exchange rate and other areas of operational concern takes place. |
| **Fourth**, no development or reconstruction activities can take place that will genuinely benefit the Syrian people, not the regime, until all Syrians have reached a comprehensive peace process and an inclusive political settlement in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2254. The United States would like a clear explanation as to how the UNDP intends to implement this CPD in line with Resolution 2254. | By working exclusively on early recovery programming, UNDP ensures full consistency with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, including its call to defer UN facilitation of reconstruction until an inclusive political agreement is reached, as per the recent discussions with the UN relief coordinator and Member States.  For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  UNDP’s position is aligned with the conclusions of the Sixth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria held on 1 April 2022 in Helsinki, Finland that, “early recovery does not constitute reconstruction and therefore it is being provided in line with donors’ red lines on reconstruction.” Early recovery can be distinguished from reconstruction in terms of design, intent, and scale and is based on humanitarian principles and implemented in a context sensitive manner, serves to strengthen resilience and local capacities, and helps people – particularly the most vulnerable -- move from dependence on humanitarian relief towards greater resilience and self-reliance. |
| Paragraph 13 - When discussing those left behind, this should be clearly specified (as it is later on in the document) to indicate the country programme will target women, youth, persons with disabilities, female-headed households, IDPs, returnees and host communities, prioritizing marginalized and worst-affected areas. | This is well noted and the suggested phrase of *“including women, youth, persons with disabilities, female-headed households, IDPs, returnees and host communities, prioritizing worst-affected areas”* is now reflected in para. 13 of the CPD. |
| **Comments by Netherlands** | UNDP Response |
| **SF-level comments** | |
| The Netherlands wishes to thank the UN agencies for their continued engagement and appreciates the adjustments that were made in the final stages based on grave concerns of The Netherlands and other donors. However, the Netherlands reiterates some serious concerns regarding the UN Strategic Framework for Syria (Framework). The Netherlands, joined by other member states, has previously expressed strong objections to the narrative of the Framework and concerns that it could undermine country level UN programs designed to help alleviate suffering of the Syrian people.  The Netherlands is disappointed that the final Framework ignores the fact that conflict is the main cause of Syrians’ suffering today. The document does not use the word “conflict” to describe the situation in Syria since 2011. | UNDP notes the comments by the Netherlands and reiterates that UNDP remains firmly committed to a principled approach to the delivery of assistance in Syria. The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs, and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the Resident Coordinator.  Reference to “humanitarian crisis” has been explicitly included in the CPD. |
| The Netherlands reiterates its call for a political solution and emphasises that no normalisation, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime engages in a political transition, in the framework of UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva process. The Netherlands will not support UN programs that engage in reconstruction, and we will keep holding the UN to the commitments it has made within the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” Support to early recovery activities is strictly limited to early recovery activities as clearly defined under the HRP. | UNDP’s early recovery programming in Syria will be conducted in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria” which are explicitly referenced in the CPD for the first time, and respond to the needs identified in the HNO and HRP. As noted in the 15 December 2021 Secretary General Report on United Nations humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2021/1030), “early recovery activities in the humanitarian response plan are focused on five main integrated areas: (a) light repair and rehabilitation of critical civilian infrastructure; (b) removal of debris and solid waste; (c) income -generating activities and market-based interventions; (d) vocational and skills training; and (e) social cohesion and community interventions” (para 52).  By working exclusively on early recovery programming, UNDP ensures full consistency with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, including its call to defer UN facilitation of reconstruction until an inclusive political agreement is reached, as per the recent discussions with the UN relief coordinator and Member States.  UNDP’s position is aligned with the conclusions of the Sixth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria held on 1 April 2022 in Helsinki, Finland that, “early recovery does not constitute reconstruction and therefore it is being provided in line with donors’ red lines on reconstruction~~.~~ Early recovery can be distinguished from reconstruction in terms of design, intent, and scale and is based on humanitarian principles and implemented in a context sensitive manner, serves to strengthen resilience and local capacities, and helps people – particularly the most vulnerable -- move from dependence on humanitarian relief towards greater self-reliance. |
| The Netherlands shares concern that the principle of ‘*non-refoulement’* is not included in the Framework, where Pillar III ‘(…) *resilient return’* mentions returns. Any discussion on returns should explicitly express the importance of ‘*non-refoulement*’. Conditions in Syria do not currently allow for safe and sustainable refugee returns. It is essential that the principle of non-refoulement is respected; that any refugee returns are voluntary, safe, informed, and dignified; and that the key concerns of the majority of Syrian refugees regarding a return home are addressed, including their personal safety and that of their families. | This comment is well noted.  UNDP has inserted a phrase in Para 2 of the CPD to qualify references to returns to include the need for these to be “*voluntary, safe, informed and dignified*”.  This reflects the position of the UN around the world. |
| **CPD-level comments & questions** | |
| The Netherlands remains concerned that a CPD based on a flawed Strategic Framework can have serious implications for UN activities and programmes in country. Can UNDP provide explanation and clear measures how it intends to address this and mitigate any risks associated with implementing this CPD on the basis of the UN Strategic Framework for Syria? | The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the Resident Coordinator. Under the CPD, UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, as reflected in para 14 of the CPD.  As extensively described in para. 26, 27, and 28 under section III. Programme and Risk Management, UNDP in Syria has significantly increased its capacity in risk mitigation and adopted a risk management approach, across its operations. UNDP regularly updates its critical risk analysis to ensure that timely preventive mitigation measures are taken to avoid programme disruption and doing harm to the communities it serves.  UNDP in Syria has invested in in-house context-sensitivity and risk management capacities and bases its programming on an assessment of the specific context in the areas in which it operates in order to ensure the relevance of its programming to local needs and deliver in a neutral and impartial way that upholds a human-rights based and *Do No Harm* approach, regardless of zones of influence.    In these efforts, UNDP’s extensive field presence and continuous, close engagement with communities is critical. UNDP has also put in place beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms. In addition, all UNDP personnel – both programme and operations – receive context sensitivity and risk management capacity building. |
| For the Netherlands, at the core of any UN engagement in Syria is adherence to “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,” including the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and independence for life-saving humanitarian assistance and early recovery and resilience activities. This also counts explicitly for the work of UNDP as it plans to implement the new CPD. However, Footnote 17 (“*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled ‘Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,*”) effectively renders implementation with adherence to the Parameters and Principles impossible. Can UNDP provide clear explanations and assurances on how it intends to address this and implement the CPD within the framework set by the Parameters and Principles? | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal, UN document that informs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria. For the first time, the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD.  Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the new text as reflected in the CPD: *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.* |
| Pressure from the regime to deviate from UN values and principles is a serious risk. Can UNDP provide clear information and assurances that a risk mitigation system is in place to resist any pressure from the regime; to continue to work and implement the CPD fully aligned with UN values and principles; to report any instances of pressure to the Executive Board; and to address practices of government corruption, diversion of aid to favoured communities and profiting from exchange rate arbitrage? | As extensively described in para. 26, 27, and 28 under section III. Programme and Risk Management, Country office systems, structures and capacities, particularly in planning, monitoring and oversight, have been strategically aligned to programmatic needs and to support risk-informed decision-making. This includes a Senior Risk Management Adviser reporting directly to the Resident Representative. The Country Office has also strengthened analytical capacities in context-sensitivity, both at Damascus level and through its seven field offices, to strengthen *do no harm* across its operations.  In addition, UNDP has strengthened its operational capacities around finance and procurement to reduce and mitigate any risks of wrongful diversion of resources in these areas through improved due diligence and appropriate risk identification and mitigation measures in responsible party selection, procurement and human resource processes. It ensures that its personnel and partners are conscious of the controls that need to be applied.  UNDP regularly updates its critical risk analysis to ensure that timely preventive mitigation measures are taken to avoid programme disruption and doing harm to the communities it serves.  UNDP, in its current role as co-chair of the United Nations Risk Management Working Group, works with other agencies to identify collective risks to the United Nations system in Syria – including risks related to corruption and diversion of aid – and implement mitigation measures.  UNDP actively participates in the Regional Dialogue Mechanism co-chaired by the RC and UK, with the membership of the US, France, Germany, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland from the donor community; and the RC, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR from the UNCT. A transparent dialogue and shared assessments between the United Nations and key Member States on such key issues as the exchange rate and other areas of operational concern takes place. |
| **Comments by SWEDEN** | UNDP Response |
| Sweden welcomes the overall priorities of the CPD, including the focus on gender equality and climate change. We welcome the intention to cooperate and coordinate with other UN agencies as well as other international organisations. | This comment is well received and acknowledged with thanks. |
| UNDP has a unique mandate to work with governance, and to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We recognize the difficulties of working with these areas in Syria, but there should be an ambition to do so. This is also important in a broader development and conflict context. We would like to see UNDP’s work in these areas strengthened in the CPD. | As in all other crises contexts where UNDP operates, and in line with the UN’s *Sustaining Peace Agenda,* the Programme seeks to promote social cohesion and lay the foundations for longer term peace through early recovery programming.  In line with UNDP’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and under the local governance and service delivery component of the CPD, UNDP will seek to prevent further erosion of essential service provision and of spaces for community participation in local governance (para. 15, 18, 19), which are critical foundations for long-term peace. Within this component, UNDP will support greater civic engagement, community participation and representation, in particular of women in local planning processes. This provides mechanisms for citizen’s voices to influence local-level decision making and early recovery prioritization, thereby advancing a human rights-based approach. |
| Sweden welcomes that the CDP includes a conflict perspective. However, this should ideally also link to an analysis about UNDP’s ability to work in all regions across Syria. We miss such an analysis in the CPD. | The CPD applies to all regions of Syria, independently of lines of control. Fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria”, which are explicitly referenced in the CPD for the first time, UNDP works together with other UN actors in Syria to ensure non-interference with its operations and prioritize its assistance based on the needs of the population. In all areas where it operates across Syria, UNDP seeks to inform its programming through local context analysis, to ensure a context-sensitive approach that actively promotes social cohesion all while avoiding doing harm.  Therefore, everywhere where it delivers assistance in Syria, UNDP carries out extensive consultations with local communities to identify not only needs, but also solutions preferred by vulnerable Syrians. This bottom-up, community-driven approach is applied regardless of lines of control.  Para 25 of the CPD acknowledges that the programme requires the programming and operational space, including the necessary security and access to beneficiaries, to deliver the envisaged results in an independent and impartial way. It notes the importance of continued governmental cooperation to facilitate access to all governorates and vulnerable populations. UNDP will continue to advocate for the programmatic and operational space to work in all regions across Syria. |
| The development needs are vast in many parts of the country. The CPD does not include any information about whether UNDP is able to work also in areas that are not controlled by the Syrian regime. We have a clear expectation that UNDP also should work in areas not controlled by the Syrian regime. An analysis about this should be included in the CPD. | The CPD, by definition, covers UNDP’s programmatic interventions across all governorates of Syria, regardless of lines of control. |
| Paragraphs 2 and 7. Sweden suggest UNDP uses the term “voluntary return” rather than “return”. | Noted and adjustment made to Para 2 to reflect “*voluntary, safe, informed and dignified* return”.  The reference to “return” in para. 7 of the CPD is in reference to the title of the UNSF priority area. |
| Paragraph 11 and 31. The Country Programme evaluation 2020 recommended UNDP to clearly articulate its approach to gender equality. The CDP could therefore be strengthened related to how the programme will adopt a gender lens based on appropriate gender analyses to inform programme implementation. | All UNDP’s analyses including the context analysis include gender analyses to inform programmes with a gender lens. UNDP will continue to apply the Gender Minimum Standards to facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender towards transformative gender programming. Four main minimum standards will guide the process, from internal processes and practices to project implementation, including gender budgeting described as follows:   1. Promote gender equality through internal practices to ensure workplace policies and procedures are in place and socialized amongst staff and partners, including motherhood/ fatherhood supported services, etc. These include anti-sexual harassment HR policies and developing staff, partner, and senior management capacity through inductions, trainings, and reflections. 2. Include gender analysis throughout the project cycle to inform the development and implementation of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability frameworks and systems. 3. Promote participation, dignity, and empowerment to ensure equal and safe access and participation geared towards breaking existing bias and stereotypes. This includes the meaningful participation by specific gender groups in the development and humanitarian sectoral programme activities throughout the project cycle, including distribution, training, and livelihood opportunities. 4. Deal with GBV and promote the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse toprotect beneficiaries. UNDP will continue supporting this mechanism during the new CPD.   Finally, within the time frame of this CPD, UNDP will be implementing a detailed action plan in response to the corporate Gender Equality Seal Programme, a whole-of-office initiative that promotes gender sensitive and responsive actions through internal practices, team capacities, and programming. The Gender Equality Seal promotes an organizational culture of equality. It incentivizes Country Offices to meet standards by integrating gender into all aspects of their work and is the organization’s flagship programme to build capacities and support transformational gender equality results.  This has now been further reflected in a new footnote 17 to para. 11 of the CPD. |
| Paragraph 14. We suggest that footnote 17 commenting on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” document be removed. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal, UN document that informs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria. For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD.  Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the following text: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.* |
| **Comments by France** | UNDP Response |
| The CPD should better reflect the reality of the ongoing conflict as well as the impact of 11 years of conflict. Responsibilities of the Syrian regime in war crimes, crimes against humanity and corruption as well as war economy and various smugglings such as drug-trafficking should be further highlighted. Crisis-sensitive programming should be taken into account especially in line with the “do no harm” principle. The ongoing political process and the framework of UNSCR2254, including mediation from the UNSG special envoy for Syria, should also be reflected in the text as the only political solution for a sustainable peace. The need for the establishment of rule of law and fight against impunity is not reflected in the analysis.    France would therefore like to see these elements taken into account, including an explicit reference to the UNSCR 2254, throughout the document and in particular in the contextual analysis. | The CPD outlines a number of key features that compound the crisis in Syria, such as the severe socio-economic crisis, the destruction of the basic services infrastructure, significant environmental degradation, large-scale migration and displacement, as well as challenges around corruption, provision of civil documentation and the management of housing, land and property records, weakened local institutional capacities and community engagement – all of which have been worsened by COVID-19 and the financial crisis in Lebanon. Given this we have also now better highlighted these dimensions by using the term “humanitarian crisis” in the text.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC.  The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities.  UNDP operates in line with the current “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner.  UNDP fully agrees that context-sensitivity and “do no harm” are of critical importance to mitigate risks in a complex environment. Guided by the United Nations human-rights-based approach, UNDP uses its in-house context-sensitivity and risk management capacities to continuously assess social risks, including risks of undermining social cohesion or protection through its programme, and to develop and implement adequate programmatic and operational mitigation measures. |
| Moreover, the following sentence should be deleted “weakened capacity to regulate the economy, inefficient administration and challenges in efforts to combat corruption have become additional challenges” as it does not reflect the reality nor the active role of the regime and corrupt officials attempting to siphon aid or favouring preferred communities and procurement companies. | UNDP notes the comment by France on this phrase.  In line with its mandate, UNDP considers that reference in the CPD to these governance-related challenges represents an important entry point for UNDP to seek to support improved governance. |
| Compliance with the Parameters and Principles is an essential element in the implementation of this CPD. The reservations expressed by the Syrian authorities (see footnote 17) are a cause for concern. Strict compliance should be mentioned in the risk analysis, given the position expressed by the Syrian regime. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal document from the UN Secretary General, that governs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes inside Syria. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria. For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD. Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the new text as reflected in the CPD: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.*  The CPD makes several references to UNDP’s context-sensitivity, risk management and due diligence measures to ensure it adheres to the principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity. |
| According to the P&P, “Assistance must be prioritized based on the needs of the population rather than on government driven”: assistance must be prioritized based on the needs of the population with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome for all UN action in Syria. We are therefore concerned that the assistance of the UN in Syria could be defined according to the Syrian regime’s needs and development strategy (Strategy “Syria 2030”) and to the extent to which the UN system would seek to benefit Damascus/line Ministries through national capacity building, given the high level of corruption that is not mentioned in the CPD, and with the risk this gives a sense of normalization, which is not acceptable. Early recovery and resilience programs should focus on communities and on the local level. | UNDP’s approach to resilience, as part of the UNCT’s wider approach to resilience assistance, is focused on the local, community level. Moreover, it adopts a community-driven, bottom-up approach, in which community priorities – identified through extensive, inclusive dialogue between communities and local authorities – inform UNDP programming in targeted areas. This ensures that assistance is prioritized based on the needs of the population and that UNDP programming abides by the Parameters and Principles’ call for a “human-rights based approach, including participation, empowerment, local ownership and sustainability.”  The prioritization of assistance will be determined through UNDP’s context-sensitive, participatory and area-based focus, which will produce community-owned recovery plans and respond to the needs identified in the Humanitarian Needs Overview, and the Humanitarian Response Plan. As noted in the 15 December 2021 Secretary General Report on United Nations humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2021/1030), “early recovery activities in the humanitarian response plan are focused on five main integrated areas: (a) light repair and rehabilitation of critical civilian infrastructure; (b) removal of debris and solid waste; (c) income -generating activities and market-based interventions; (d) vocational and skills training; and (e) social cohesion and community interventions” (para 52). |
| In line with the P&P, “Life-saving humanitarian needs remain enormous in Syria and assistance delivery through the most direct routes remains critical”: assistance should more than ever remain focused on meeting the enormous humanitarian needs of the population. Given the current circumstances, we believe it is too early to go further than resilience and early recovery. In addition, development activities would strengthen the Syria regime’s institutions at the expense of the protection of Human Rights. The humanitarian development nexus does not apply to Syria in that context.  We would therefore like to see these elements taken into account in the contextual analysis. | UNDP knows the enormous and rising humanitarian needs across Syria, and recognizes that severe economic and financial crises have now become main drivers of these needs. As such, UNDP agrees that early recovery is the most relevant form of humanitarian assistance in a protracted crisis, given its focus on building local capacities and preserving local assets. When it comes to Syria, early recovery assistance – the focus of UNDP’s CPD – is designed in a way that promotes local dialogue and trust-building between and within communities and contributes to advancing the foundations for local level peacebuilding as described in para. 18, 19 and 20 under II. Programme priorities and partnership. This is fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway, and that early recovery activities offer an opportunity to go beyond life-saving assistance and offer minimum living conditions for local affected communities. In 2021 only, UNDP has engaged with 213 local communities and conducted eight local context analyses engaging with diverse community groups.  The reference to HDP nexus is in line with the language of the UN Strategic Framework: *“In line with SDG 17 and a holistic and integrated programming approach, broad-based operational and strategic partnerships across the humanitarian, development, human rights and peace pillars of the UN system are central to the efficient and effective achievement of SF Outcomes.”* |
| The intervention framework of the UNDP should be better explained in relation to the implementation of UNSCR2254 as well as the intervention sectors of early recovery (water, sanitation, health, shelter). In that respect, the following indications should be more specific in order to respect this framework:   * Para 18 “*UNDP support will consist of three elements: (a) improve access to and quality of basic services through the rehabilitation of critical civilian service infrastructure*”; * Para 19 “This outcome will pay special attention to labour market needs in urban areas and agriculture-based livelihoods in rural areas” * Para20 “*UNDP will improve access for the most vulnerable people to electricity, including renewable energy solutions, and to equitable water resources, including through inclusive water resource management. It will support crisis-affected communities in restoring degraded land, forests and ecosystems; promote climate-smart agriculture; and improve solid and hazardous waste management.”* | All activities under paragraphs 18, 19 and 20 of UNDP’s CPD fall under the scope of early recovery assistance, which is consistent with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, including its call to defer UN facilitation of reconstruction until an inclusive political agreement is reached in Syria. They are also consistent with S/RES/2585 (2021) which “welcomes all efforts and initiatives to broaden the humanitarian activities in Syria, including water, sanitation, health, education, and shelter early recovery projects” (OP4).  In that regard, UNDP’s position is in line with the Executive Summary of the Sixth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria held on 1 April 2022 in Helsinki, Finland, “early recovery does not constitute reconstruction and therefore it is being provided in line with donors’ the red lines on reconstruction.”    In line with the context-sensitive and area-based approach outlined in para. 15 of the CPD, greater specificity regarding UNDP’s early recovery interventions will be defined through an inclusive, rights- based and participatory approach that promotes community ownership and sustainability in defined geographic areas. |
| On the number of refugees and displaced persons (para. 3), UNDP should refer explicitly to UNHCR figures. | This is to confirm that UNDP’s analysis is based on the numbers of refugees and displaced persons provided in the UN Strategic Framework and the Humanitarian Needs Overview, where the number of refugees is derived from UNHCR figures. The CPD is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework. |
| References to sanctions including “external factors” should be deleted (paragraph 1) | This term is fully aligned with the agreed text in the UN Strategic Framework. Like in any context, multiple external factors impact socio-economic dynamics in Syria. These factors have grown in significance in recent years, contributing to a worsening socio-economic crisis in the country. Most recently, the economic ripple effects of the war in Ukraine have worsened food insecurity in the country, as in much of the Middle East region. |
| Contextual analysis should make a clear reference to the political, administrative and security obstacles for a voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees. | This comment is well noted  Para. 2 of the CPD now reflects the phrase “voluntary, safe, informed and dignified” to qualify returns. |
| Para; 13 : “*Recognizing the political realities of working in the Syrian Arab Republic, the overarching goal of UNDP is to strengthen the foundations for future sustainable peace and development to improve the quality of life of all Syrians, especially those currently left furthest behind.”*  Political process based on the framework of UNSCR2254 is the only foundation of a possible future sustainable peace, it falls under the mandate of the UN Special Envoy not under UNDP's mandate in Syria, so this sentence should be deleted. | UNDP operates in line with the current “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner.  As per the twin 2016 resolutions passed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture ([A/RES/70/262](https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/262) and [S/RES/2282](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016)) - commonly referred to as the Sustaining Peace resolutions), ‘sustaining peace’ "should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.” The resolutions further emphasize, “that sustaining peace (…) should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations’ engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions, and needs sustained international attention and assistance.” |
| In line with the UNDP mandate and the framework defined by early recovery, the nature of the following actions should be specified:   * Output 1.1: Local economic recovery and livelihoods for vulnerable populations enabled through inclusive private sector recovery and development, human capital development and pro-poor market interventions * Output 1.3: Local-level support for social protection/cohesion, gender equity, social inclusion and sustaining peace enabled   The following actions appear to fall outside this mandate:   * Output: 2.3.: Local social services and basic community infrastructures repaired (Indicator 2.3.1: Number of infrastructure rehabilitated) * Output: 2.4: Access to essential electrical power restored (Indicator 2.4.2: Number of hydroelectric plants rehabilitated)   Generally speaking, the nature of the actions envisaged is too broad and would benefit from being more specific. | These local level activities (1.1, 1.3, 2.3 and 2.4) fall under the overarching early recovery and resilience work as reflected in the HRP. As noted in the 15 December 2021 Secretary General Report on United Nations humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2021/1030), “early recovery activities in the humanitarian response plan are focused on five main integrated areas: (a) light repair and rehabilitation of critical civilian infrastructure; (b) removal of debris and solid waste; (c) income-generating activities and market-based interventions; (d) vocational and skills training; and (e) social cohesion and community interventions” (para 52).  The proposed activities are further derived from UNDP’s mandate under the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which focuses on building resilience to respond to systemic uncertainty and risk. Guided by UNDP’s strategic directions, and within early recovery efforts fully aligned with the “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria”, the actions are to support the resilience building of local communities.  In line with the context-sensitive and area-based approach outlined in para. 15 of the CPD, greater specificity in the definition of UNDP’s early recovery activities will be the outcome of an inclusive, rights-based and participatory approach that promotes community ownership and sustainability in defined geographic areas. |
| **Comments by Turkey** | UNDP Response |
| Turkey, along with other member states, has expressed its strong concerns regarding the UN Strategic Framework 2022-2024 for Syria and objected to the narrative of this document, which does not correctly reflect the current situation in the country and the ongoing conflict, where the Syrian regime is responsible for the devastating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the country.  The Strategic Framework ignores the fact that the enormous social and economic problems as well as the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure in Syria are the direct result of the regime’s ongoing war against its own people. The entire narrative is shaped around the idea that there is no culprit behind the situation. As such, the Framework reflects the views of the Syrian regime, rather than the needs of the Syrian people and reproduces and supports the discourse of the regime.  The UNDP CPD draft has the same shortcoming in context analysis. This, in turn, could hinder proper risk management and undermine country level implementation, whose sole focus should be addressing the needs and alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people in the face of an ongoing conflict. | UNDP notes the position of Turkey and reiterates that UNDP remains firmly committed to a principled approach to the delivery of assistance in Syria. The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC.  Reference to “humanitarian crisis” has been explicitly included in the CPD. |
| In order to do that,the UN must maintain the consistency and coherence of its overall engagement in Syria, in line with “One UN” approach. Different pillars of the system cannot employ contradicting policies. *How does the UNDP plan to ensure this?* | As in all other crises contexts where UNDP operates, and in line with the UN’s *Sustaining Peace Agenda,* the Programme seeks to promote social cohesion and laying the foundations for peace through early recovery programming, thereby supporting overarching UN efforts to sustain peace in a way that complements the political process led by the UN Special Envoy for Syria.  UNDP places high importance on its diverse partnerships with all UN partners and will proactively engage in different working groups established at the country level to enhance programmatic and operational coherence of “one UN”. In that regard, as reflected under Para. 22, UNDP is part of the UN Country Team, the Humanitarian Country Team, the Programme Management Team, the UN Hubs in the governorates, and the Operations Management Team, where it supports the reform agenda through the roll-out of the Business Operations Strategy. In 2022, UNDP will carry a leadership/chair role in the socio-economic pillar group and the local governance pillar group, the Risk Management Working Group, and the Return and Reintegration Working Group and will be an active member in various other system-wide working groups and task forces such as the socioeconomic impact assessment, poverty, social protection, cash working group, humanitarian access, PSEA, Accountability to Affected Populations, Youth and others.  To highlight UNDP’s commitment to one UN approach, *“In the spirit of delivering as “One UN”, UNDP will be part of the UN Country Team, the Humanitarian Country Team, the Programme Management Team, the UN Hubs in the governorates, and the Operations Management Team”* is now referenced in Para 22. |
| It is crucial that the UN, including its funds and programs, both at the planning and implementation phases, reflect the views, expectations and the needs of all Syrian people. This is also a requirement of the “Whole-of-Syria” approach, which was established by the Organization itself in response to the humanitarian situation. | UNDP fully agrees with this statement. Therefore, everywhere where it delivers assistance in Syria, UNDP carries out extensive consultations with local communities to identify not only needs, but also solutions preferred by vulnerable Syrians. This bottom-up, community-driven approach is applied regardless of lines of control. |
| UN programming cannot overlook the needs of millions of Syrians by treating the regime as the only counterpart or beneficiary of its assistance, in particular when it is unclear what the regime is expected to deliver in exchange for this assistance. | UNDP’s assistance in Syria focuses on vulnerable Syrian communities, as identified by independent needs assessments carried out by inter-agency assessments, UNDP’s numerous field offices across the country, and its grantees, responsible parties and implementing partners. |
| It is also crucial that the issue of early recovery is implemented without discrimination for all Syrians in need throughout the country, the majority of whom live outside the control of the regime. *How does the UNDP plan to ensure this?* | UNDP fully agrees that early recovery assistance should be delivered without discrimination to all Syrians in need throughout the country. Through its different implementation modalities, UNDP is currently delivering assistance to Syrians in need across the national territory, in close coordination with other humanitarian actors operating across the country. Focusing on those left furthest behind, UNDP will target women, youth, persons with disabilities, female-headed households, IDPs, returnees and host communities, prioritizing marginalized and worst-affected areas. UNDP will support the UNCT in advancing the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. |
| Given the serious problem of regime’s corruption and diversion of international aid for its own purposes, close monitoring and meticulous risk management, with full institutional transparency and all necessary safeguard measures are essential. *How does the UNDP plan to ensure this?* | UNDP regularly updates its critical risk analysis to ensure that timely preventive mitigation measures are taken to avoid programme disruption and doing harm to the communities it serves. It exercises due diligence and appropriate risk mitigation measures in procurement processes.  Country office systems, structures and capacities, particularly in design, planning, implementation monitoring and oversight, have been strategically aligned to programmatic needs and to support risk-informed decision-making. This includes a Senior Risk Management Adviser reporting to the Resident Representative. The Country Office has also strengthened analytical capacities in context-sensitivity, both at Damascus level and through its seven field offices, to strengthen *do no harm* across its operations.  UNDP, in its current role as co-chair of the United Nations Risk Management Working Group, works with other agencies to identify collective risks to the United Nations system in Syria – including risks related to corruption and diversion of aid - and implement mitigation measures. |
| Well-intentioned efforts of the UN or its frameworks and program documents cannot be allowed to become instruments in the attempts of the regime to create a false impression of normalcy or a post-conflict narrative for Syria. | The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC.  The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities. It does so by underpinning its programming with context-sensitive analysis and risk management measures to ensure “do no harm”, while seeking to strengthen social cohesion.  In the delivery of its programme across Syria, UNDP operates fully under the UNSG’s “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria”, and abides by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Its focus is to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians, as outlined in the CPD |
| The ultimate objective in Syria is a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition in order to end the conflict, which is a UN facilitated process in line with Security Council resolution 2254. | UNDP, as a United Nations programme, fully supports S/RES 2254 and the work of the UN Special Envoy for Syria. |
| What are the concrete steps to be taken by the UNDP to implement the CPD in line with UN’s Parameters and Principles for Assistance in Syria, when they are not accepted by the major recipient, namely the regime?  The central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs is to leave no one behind. How does the UNDP plan to implement the CPD without leaving any Syrian behind, in the context of an ongoing conflict where the main responsible of the aggravated problems that the UN Agencies are trying to address is the regime itself? | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal document from the UN Secretary General, that governs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes inside Syria. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD. Footnote 18 has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the new text as reflected in the CPD: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.*  UNDP in Syria has invested in in-house context-sensitivity and risk management capacities. The Country Office continuously assesses risks to its ability to deliver assistance in a neutral and impartial way that upholds a human-rights based and *Do No Harm* approach. In these efforts, UNDP’s extensive field presence and continuous, close engagement with communities is critical. UNDP has also put in place beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms. All UNDP personnel – both programme and operations – receive context sensitivity and risk management capacity building. UNDP’s engagement with national counterparts, including at the local level, is also critical to communicate UNDP’s values, principles and operating modalities. |
| **Comments by UK** | UNDP Response |
| The United Kingdom reiterates its serious concerns regarding certain aspects of the UN Strategic Framework for Syria (Framework), particularly the absence of language around the armed conflict and that Syria is not yet assessed as safe for refugees to return. The document contains outdated data or information, or pivotal information is omitted entirely. | UNDP notes the position of the UK, and confirms that UNDP remains firmly committed to a principled approach to the delivery of assistance in Syria. The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC. |
| The CPDs, like the Strategic Framework, are lacking important references to the armed conflict and the resulting humanitarian crisis. We agree with the US that the CPDs’ country and community context analyses which inform both the public and its own program decision-making should reflect stakeholders’ input and the impact of armed conflicts on the country and local communities. | In undertaking its country and context analysis, UNDP ensures the input and perspectives of the widest range of stakeholders reflecting local level needs and concerns. This is primarily achieved through broad, local level consultations led by its numerous field offices across the country. UNDP informs area-based programming through local context sensitivity analyses, which include an assessment of the impact of the last 11 years on communities, including on social cohesion and protection.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC.  The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities. It does so by underpinning its programming with context-sensitive analysis and risk management measures to ensure “do no harm”, while seeking to strengthen social cohesion.  Reference to “humanitarian crisis” has been explicitly included in the CPD. |
| We welcome the emphasis on humanitarian early recovery being part of the UN’s response in Syria alongside emergency humanitarian relief, especially to ensure the implementation of the paragraphs related to early recovery projects contained in Security Council resolution 2585 (2021). Early recovery must be delivered firmly within our political red lines of no reconstruction until the conditions of a political settlement under 2254 have been met. | UNDP’s CPD is fully in line with the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria. UNDP, like the UK, distinguishes between early recovery programming and reconstruction. UNDP agrees with the UK’s definition of early recovery assistance as defined in the UK’s Humanitarian Strategy: ‘early recovery and resilience activities (…) offer an opportunity to go beyond immediate life-saving assistance and offer minimum living conditions for local affected communities as well as rehabilitation activities where these support humanitarian objectives.’ |
| The implementation of the UN’s humanitarian operations must adhere to “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,” including the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and independence for life-saving humanitarian assistance and early recovery and resilience activities. This includes securing access to the geographies of Syria to reach the most vulnerable Syrians affected by conflict. **Footnote #17**, which reads “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled ‘Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria,*” raises significant questions about how the UN will secure the necessary permissions and access for principled aid delivery. The UK requests an explanation of how the UN will overcome the resistance of the Government to continuously improve its principled delivery. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal document from the UN Secretary General, that governs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes inside Syria. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria. For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD. Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has now been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the new text as reflected in the CPD: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”.* |
| **Comments by Denmark** | UNDP Response |
| DK reiterates its general concerns regarding the UNSF, a number of which are also reflected in the draft CPD. These include:   * Insufficiently holistic analyses of the conflict in Syria, its root causes, human rights violations and the realities on the ground, including the dire humanitarian situation in northern Syria. There is a need for deeper and broader analysis of the continued state of conflict in the country and its development since its beginning in 2011, as the basis for any programming. Challenges related to humanitarian access and thereby delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with humanitarian principles should also be elaborated. | The CPD outlines a number of key features that compound the crisis in Syria, such as the severe socio-economic crisis, the destruction of the basic services infrastructure, significant environmental degradation, large-scale migration and displacement, as well as challenges around corruption, provision of civil documentation and the management of housing, land and property records, weakened local institutional capacities and community engagement – all of which have been worsened by COVID-19 and the financial crisis in Lebanon. Given this we have also now better highlighted these dimensions by using the term “humanitarian crisis” in the text.  The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the RC.    The CPD is a technical document focused on situating UNDP’s work within the United Nations Strategic Framework and identifying the programmatic priorities of its interventions. The primary priority for UNDP through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrians, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable communities.  UNDP operates fully in line with the current “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, which recognize that reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway but also that assistance is to be prioritized based on the needs of the population, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals, in a manner that protects human rights as an outcome, and that such assistance be delivered in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and non-politicized manner.  UNDP’s analysis of the dire socio-economic and humanitarian conditions of vulnerably Syrians apply to communities across the country, including northern Syria.  UNDP bases all its programming on local, context analysis. UNDP is grateful for Denmark’s support to strengthening UNDP Syria’s context sensitivity capacities through bilateral and UNDP Funding Window funding. The establishment of a Context Sensitivity Team in the Country Office is a core component of UNDP’s approach to ensure *do no harm* and humanitarian principles, including through the identification of humanitarian access challenges. The activities of this team are generously funded by Denmark and service the wider UN system in Syria. |
| Footnotes regarding reservations on the side of the Syrian regime regarding the UN “Principles and Parameters of UN assistance in Syria”: Adherence to P&P remains essential. We expect all aspects of implementation of the CPD’s and programming to be compliant and within the scope of P&P and the UN/agencies to ensure that adherence is monitored. | UNDP operates fully in line with the “Parameters and Principles of UN assistance in Syria.” The “Parameters and Principles” is an internal, UN document that informs the assistance delivered by UN agencies, funds and programmes. It is the responsibility of UN agencies, funds and programmes to abide by the UN Parameters and Principles in Syria. For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  To more precisely reflect the above, the phrase “*fully in line with the current Parameters and Principles*” is now reflected in Para 14 of the CPD.  Footnote 18 (formerly footnote 17) has been rephrased from *“The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not accept the document titled “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, since this document was developed internally within the United Nations Secretariat and was not consulted with the Government.”* to the next text as reflected in the CPD: “*The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was not consulted on the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria*”. |
| Denmark is guided, inter alia, by the EU Council Conclusions on Syria from April 2018 in our decision-making and as a donor in response to the Syria conflict. The EU Council Conclusions stipulate that “EU assistance must benefit the population of Syria and avoid benefits accruing to the Syrian regime that would legitimise its national and local governance”. CPD references to the strategy plan “Syria 2030” are concerning. Denmark reminds agencies of donor conditionalities, including those of the EU, not to support reconstruction until a political process, on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, is firmly underway. | By working exclusively on early recovery programming, UNDP ensures consistency with the “Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria”, including its call for the UN to defer facilitation of reconstruction until an inclusive political agreement is reached. For the first time, “the Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria” are explicitly referenced in the CPD.  UNDP considers that early recovery does not amount to reconstruction, but rather that it serves to strengthen resilience and local capacities, contributes to solving long standing problems, and helps people move from dependence on humanitarian relief towards greater self-reliance. Early recovery can be distinguished from reconstruction in terms of design, intent, and scale and is based on humanitarian principles and implemented in a context sensitive manner. In this regard, UNDP’s position is aligned to the Executive Summary of the Sixth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria held on 1 April 2022 in Helsinki, Finland, which states that, “early recovery does not constitute reconstruction and therefore it is being provided in line with donors’ the red lines on reconstruction.” |
| Positive to see that climate adaptation is an incorporated part of the CPD. | This is acknowledged with thanks. |